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JOHN BYRNE

FROM
X-MEN
TO
FANTASTIC 4
TO
HULK

THE GROWTH OF MARVEL

RUBY SPEARS ANIMATION

SUPERHERO GAMES

MILTON CANIFF, MORT WALKER AND CARTOONISTS ON CAMPUS

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EDITORIAL

BY HAL SCHUSTER

What does the title tell us about the magazine? Which topics and subjects are of greatest interest to the readers attracted to such a title? That is a decision that we face every day. Should more stress be placed on animation or comic strips, or would it be better to reserve more of the space for the straight reporting of what is happening in the comic book world? Are our readers more interested in current comic books, what is on the stands—and should we then add a larger section of comic book reviews? Should we focus more completely on the upcoming news? (For that matter, is there even enough news to properly fill most of a magazine?)

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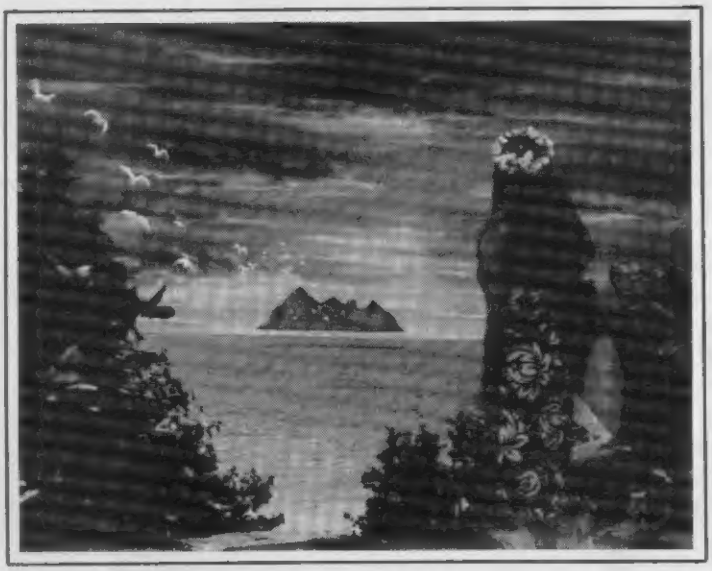
We have tried experiments such as the special issue we devoted to Marvel Animation, this issue and the one before last where we presented a detailed panel discussion on comic strips, and an upcoming number in which we will focus most of the book on future plans of the comic book companies.

Perhaps our proper course is to devote our main feature to an area of current comic books that is of primary interest to a large group of comic book fans, rotate the other feature spot between the other areas of interest and utilize the columns to properly balance out the book. Should we resume offering tips on collecting comic books, or report when major sales take place of key historical magazines? Or maybe we should pursue a path we haven't even thought of yet. Only you, the readers, can really answer these questions, and everyone here hopes that we will soon be flooded with suggestions. Consider this our official throwing open of the gates to give you an opportunity to play editor. You know best what you want and what you would most like to see—let us know, Ok?

A final note. We have begun to receive letters relating to our last editorial. It appears that many of you are taking a second look at the works of the great John Buscema, particularly now that he is once again drawing **The Avengers**, and many have even sent in orders for the issue in which we spotlighted him. That thrills us here at **COMICS FEATURE.** Not because we will be able to sell a few more copies (although that always helps!), nor even because John will get the attention he so richly deserves, but because it means that our readers are willing to maintain an open mind and that they are very interested in discovering the many fine efforts in the comic art field, whether their about superheroes or not.

FEATURE NEWS

LET'S GET PERSONAL ABOUT HAWAIIAN GODS



Normally this space is used to articulate on the major currents rending the comic book field, to comment on the wares of the various publishers or to speculate on the fate of the direct market or other such earthshaking events in the four color universe. This time I am going to ask your kind indulgence to allow me to reveal a personal project of which I am quite proud. (Actually it beats commenting on the fact that with the exit of Seagate from the field of comic book distribution, hot on the heels of Pacific's demise, none of the comic book distributors in business when I entered the industry remain. I makes me feel very old and quite depressed so I will not dwell on it at this time.)

I really am quite proud and excited to be working on the project that I am about to reveal to you, and I am even more excited about the people that I am working with. The book, **The Fires of Pele**, is a new type of graphic novel. Not exactly a comic book it does involve comic book-type illustration by Sergio (MAD) Aragones, artist/writer of Marvel's **Groo** and by animator Lee Mishkin, who did the cartoon sequences for the popular movie, **Nine to Five**.

"**The Fires of Pele** may be the best fantasy story Mark Twain never wrote," comments fantasy/science fiction expert Forrest J Ackerman. "But then again, maybe he did write it."

Hollace and Paul Davids claim to have discovered the waterlogged 90 year old manuscript in a trunk in a sunken ship off the coast of the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The ship is said to be none other than the Warrimoo, which Twain sailed to Honolulu, Tahiti and Australia in his later years on his round-the-world lecture tour.

The book is literally a volcanic eruption of imagination. It chronicles Twain's encounters with such Hawaiian gods and creatures as MOHO, THE GOD OF STEAM: KONA THE GIANT: THE DEMON OWLS: THE KAKAMORA and THE LIZARD LADIES. Also, there's his visit to THE FLOATING ISLAND OF KIAHUNA, THE TEMPLE OF THE RAIN-GOD, THE VOLCANO DUNGEON and his sparring with THE MOANING IDOLS.

But best of all are Mark Twain's encounters with THE MENHULAS. They're a special tribe of Hawaiian Menehunes, the dwarf-like leprechauns of the Hawaiian Islands. They live on the floating island, and they're expert stone masons, who can build a palace, temple or great wall in a single night. They have all kinds of magic to use against the evil Hawaiian gods who cause typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and storms.

One of the most special features of the book is the truly fantastic collection of photographs that illustrate the story. The special effects are so astonishing that Ray Harryhausen, the legendary genius of effects movies who brought us **The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad** and **Jason and the Argonauts**, has asked, "How were they done?" These special effects include the special animations that provide the comic book-like appeal.

With special effects by Mark Wolf, Menehula designs by Sergio Aragones and Lee Mishkin, and Hawaiian location photography by Paul Davids, the photos vividly bring the story to life.

Sergio Aragones, incidentally, is the creator of the popular Marvel comic book, **Groo, the Wanderer**, about a clumsy barbarian who brings trouble and bad luck wherever he roams. **Groo** is proving to be a sell-out with every issue, and additionally, Sergio Aragones Mad pocket books have sold millions of copies worldwide.

Lee Mishkin is noted for the animation sequence featuring Lily Tomlin in **Nine to Five** and the tv special **Faeries**.

Paul Davids, production coordinator for Marvel Animation, wrote the screenplay for **She Dances Alone**, a feature film starring Bud Cort and Max von Sydow, about the ballet artist Nijinsky and his daughter, Kyra.

Hollace Davids is a staff publicist for Columbia Pictures and has written for CBS and several production companies.

Mark Wolf has done special effects for numerous tv shows (including **Dr. Strange**) and movies as varied as Sam Peckinpah's **Osterman Weekend** and the soon-to-be released **Attack of the B-Movie Monster**, which features Mark's superb stop-motion animation in a spoof of the 1950s monster films.

With **The Fires of Pele**, NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC. expands its line of quality, all-color books into new realms of fantasy and imagination, offering a product far more dazzling than popular illustrated novels, superhero comic books or any other form of photo-book.

MARVEL'S ANNUAL EVENT

Marvel Comics has a hectic schedule of annuals planned for this summer. Since the very beginning of the company, when they issued **Strange Tales Annual** in which Spider-Man shared an adventure with the Human Torch, annuals have meant something special. This year is hoped to be no exception.

This month, the **Avengers Annual**, scripted by Roger Stern and co-plotted with John Byrne—who also provided the pencil breakdowns—and the **Fantastic Four Annual**, written and drawn by Byrne, will cross over to offer both teams pitted against the Skrull empire. Mark Gruenwald reveals that the governors of each Skrull-occupied world has declared himself the new emperor, hoping to fill the vacuum left by the destruction of the Skrull homeworld. This will lead to civil war, the reappearance of an old foe of the FF not seen in over 20 years and the final resolution of the Skrulls.

The X-Men and Alpha Flight will team up in a story written by Chris Claremont and drawn by former X-Men penciller Paul Smith. Inks will be by Bob Wiacek. This tale is a portion of a larger mutant epic and will appear in the two teams respective books. The conclusion will then follow in **The New Mutants Special** with work by Claremont and Art Adams and the **X-Men Annual** (where the same creative team will be joined by inker Terry Austin).

Editor Ann Nocenti informs us that Alpha Flight and the X-Men will be "getting involved with a scheme of Loki's".

Along the way, an architect, a geologist and two other specialists (including Madelaine Summers) are endowed with bizarre powers. They form a new team of superheroes, the Beserkers. Loki finally meets with defeat but enlists the aid of the Enchantress to secure his revenge on the X-Men. Unfortunately for the New Mutants, when she comes knocking at the mansion, she mistakes them for their older counterparts. Amara is sent to fairyland, Dani joins the Valkyries and Sam confronts the trolls as they suffer the feat intended for the X-Men. The issue the story appears in, termed a special rather than an annual, will be 64 pages of Baxter paper and will contain no ads.

Then comes the **X-Men Annual** when the team goes off to Asgard to save the New Mutants. Mutants, gods, trolls and various other beasties mix it up.

1985 will also offer a collection of Spider-Man annuals all edited by Jim Owsley. The first, **Web of Spiderman**, should be out by the time that you read this. Spider-Man's oldest home, the amazing one, will offer a tale by Louise Simonson and Mary Wilshire. It is scheduled to showcase a comedic story of the spider slayers and Mary Jane Watson. Peter David, Mark Beachum and Joe Rubinstein create the story for **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man Annual**. In that one two rival gangs are ready to tear each other apart when a man who can stop the war with a word refuses to become involved. Another telling of the "With great power..." tale no doubt.

Thor Annual this year is by none other than John Buscema on pencils and inks, joined by writer Alan Zelenetz. Thor faces Mephisto. Editor Ralph Macchio wishes to use the book to restore Mephisto to his status as the ultimate embodiment of all things evil, far more powerful than ever previously indicated. Ulik the troll will also make an appearance in this comic scheduled for September release.

John Byrne and Sal Buscema unite to create the **Hulk Annual**. The story centers on the varied effects that gamma rays have on different kinds of people.

Rounding out the crop will be annuals showcasing Conan and Rom.

Continued on page 42

BALDER AND KARNILLA

Written by Walt Simonson and pencilled and inked by Sal Buscema, **Balder and Karnilla** "Reveals the tempestuous, paradoxical and seemingly contradictory romance that has tortured the lives of both Balder and Karnilla, it also heralds a new war that is about to sweep an Asgard struggling to rebuild itself after its brush with annihilation at the hand of Surtur," reveals Dwight Jon Zimmerman in the latest issue of **Marvel Age**.

Series editor Ralph Macchio stated that **Balder and Karnilla** will have a number of themes. Politics—the relationship of political power with some of the sleazy things going on in Asgard, and the strength of one man's—or god's—uncorruptable will and how it can bend almost anything if he so chooses. And it is also about the redemption of character.

"It's really going to be what a Limited Series should be. It will develop the characters to their fullest potential.

Animated Antics

RUBY SPEARS

BY JAMES VAN HISE

All drawings © 1985 Ruby Spears

Dragon's Lair, Turbo Teen, Mr. T and the return of **Alvin and the Chipmunks** are only the latest in a long string of successes for Joseph Ruby and Kenneth Spears.

Ruby-Spears Enterprises, Inc. is a division of the Taft Entertainment Company, which also owns Hanna-Barbera. Successful since they opened in 1977, Ruby and Spears had a long line of credits and experiences on their way to founding their own production company.

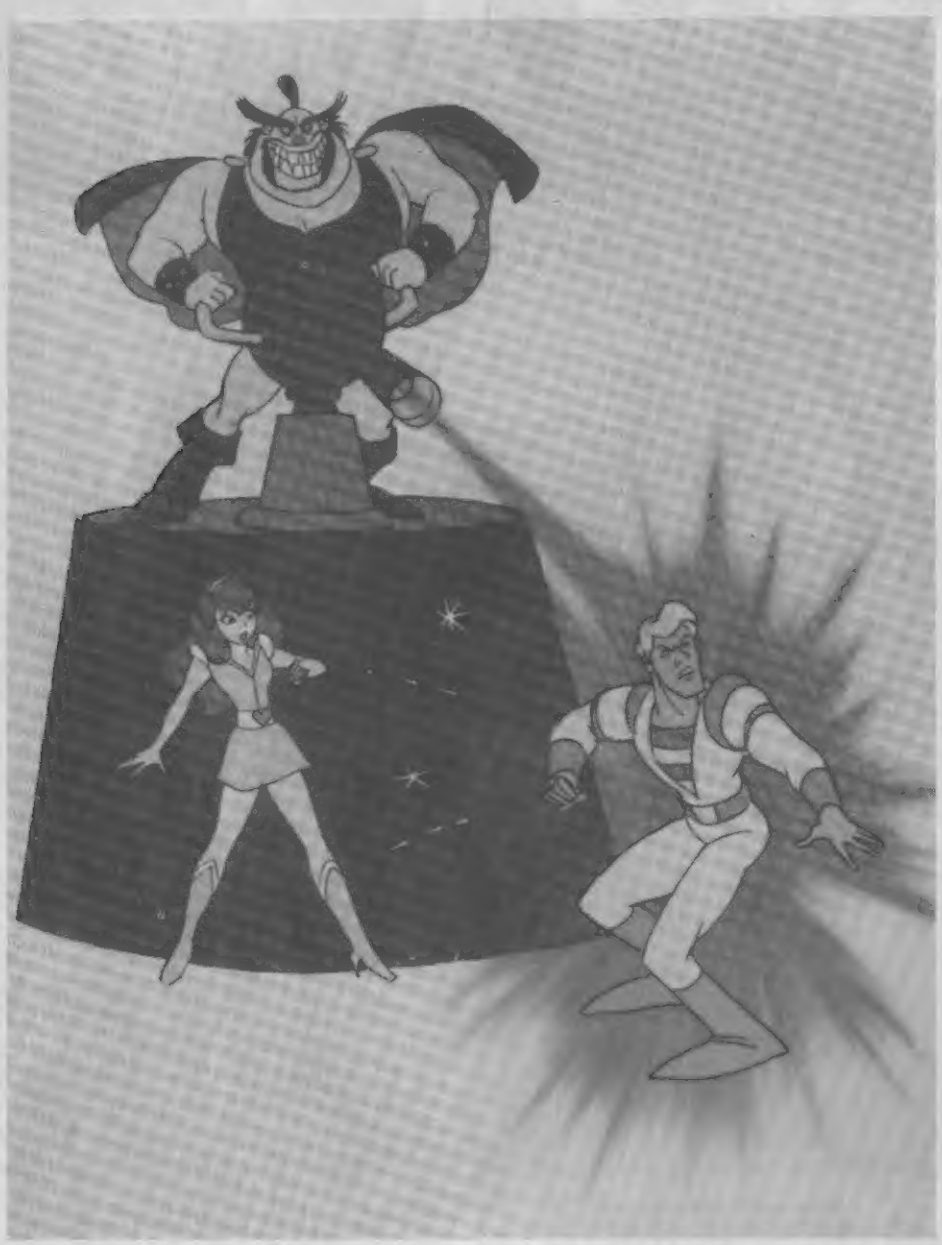
The two men met at Hanna-Barbera in 1959 where they were film editors. Kenneth Spears had taken the job at the urging of a friend while he was working at acquiring a degree in accounting. The call of the movie business proved to be a siren he could not ignore.

While at Hanna-Barbera they were given the opportunity to write the gags for openers, closes and the bridges of such cartoon classics as the old **Quickdraw McGraw** and **Huckleberry Hound**. "So I began writing evenings for the tv series that I was editing by day," Ruby recalls.

By 1962, Spears and Ruby were working together in their free time on story ideas. Spears even joined the Hanna-Barbera story department for a time, but he soon returned to editing, where the pay was more lucrative.

When Ruby left to work at 20th Century Fox, Spears soon followed and they became editors on such live-action series as **Batman, The Green Hornet, Lost In Space** and **Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea**. While at Fox they began trying their hand at full scripts and submitted one to **Voyage**. The associate producer sat on it for a year and finally admitted that it was better than 80 percent of what the pros did for him. But he couldn't bring himself to give such a big break to two guys in the editing department.

In their pursuit of writing credits



which would secure them an agent, they contacted their former employer Joseph Barbera. He gave them an assignment. "We worked on the script and delivered it to his front door," Spears explains. "We shoved it under the mat late one night."

Barbera forwarded it to a young programming executive named Fred Silverman. Silverman urged Barbera to retain them on all CBS shows.

In their first season at Hanna-Barbera they wrote for **The Herculoids, The Mighty Mightor, Space Ghost, Shazzam** and **The Fantastic Four**. They also developed **Young Gulliver**, the first half-hour animated cartoon for Saturday mornings which consisted of one story rather than segments. They worked on the animated segments of **The Banana Splits Adventure Hour** (which included "Arabian Knights", "Three Musketeers" and "Micro Ventures").

While at Hanna-Barbera, Ruby and Spears developed and helped launch the highly successful **Scooby Doo** series, which continues over 13 years later, making it the longest-running cartoon in network history.

Ruby and Spears had always wanted to be producers. In 1971 they took advantage of an opportunity to join De Patie-Freleng Productions as associate producers and directors of program development. This too led to bigger things.

In 1974, Fred Silverman appointed Ruby & Spears as the West Coast representatives to supervise writing and production of the CBS television network's Saturday morning lineup. They also acted as story consultants on the live-action **Planet of the Apes** series.

In 1975, when Silverman moved over to ABC, he hired them as ABC-TV's special consultants and developers. They created and supervised production of such Saturday morning series as **Captain Caveman, Dynomutt, Jabberjaw** and **Superfriends**.

"We still wanted to produce," says Spears. In 1977 they got their grandest opportunity when Filmways approached them with an offer to underwrite them in a production company. They accepted the offer, but even though they were leaving ABC, the network granted them an exclusive contract to produce series and specials for its Saturday schedule. "This was the first time any new animation company had guaranteed commitments," says Spears. "What a way to open our doors!"

In its first season in 1978, Ruby-Spears Productions produced the **Fangface** series and **The Puppy Who Wanted a Boy**. More "Puppy" specials were produced along with successful series such as **Plasticman, Heathcliff** and **Thundarr the Barbarian**.

In 1981, Ruby-Spears Productions' assets were sold to Taft Broadcasting Company. Ruby and Spears became co-executive producers and co-chief executive officers of Ruby-Spears Enterprises.

Spears believes their fast acceptance in a highly competitive market is attributed to an all-around knowledge of production and writing as well as their background in animation and live-action shows. He also credits partner Joe Ruby with having a very creative imagination.

"To be successful in this business, you must be a dreamer," Ruby states.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

SILVER AGE

THE EXPANSION OF MARVEL COMICS

After the **Batman** tv show, the 'camp' craze busted. Sales declined throughout the DC Comics line, to levels below those that they had enjoyed before the show had begun.

Even as DC began to worry, Marvel was still riding high. Lee and Goodman saw their line's sales soar until they felt bold enough to expand first their staff, with new and unusual talents, then the line itself, with a crop of new titles. This prosperity, as with DC's, was not to last, but it enabled Marvel to make a number of further contributions of its own to the changing look of the field.

Of all Marvel's new staffers, none were to have as great an impact on the company as a whole as the fan-turned-pro Roy Thomas. His first regular assignment was **Sgt. Fury**, but his heart was clearly not in it and he soon turned the chores over to the a young discovery of his own, Gary Friedrich. He also did fill-in writing throughout the line, and eventually took over the Sub-Mariner (**Tales to Astonish** 93, July, 1967), where with Adkins, Everett and Werner Roth, he continued Lee's brand of gladiatorial battle. His first significant contributions, however, were to be made on the two teams which Lee passed into his hands, the X-Men and the Avengers.

From his first appearance on **X-Men**, Thomas showed himself to be a very wordy writer of dialogue, intent on adding touches of characterization even to the most insignificant background players. His opening splash panel, depicting a bank robbery by Unus and the Blob, sports ten different word balloons and a caption, totalling nearly two hundred words, which allow us to understand the incident from the point of view of villains, victims and bystanders alike. In the course of the issue, the X-Men and the two evil mutants prove very loquacious in revealing details of the story and their personal reactions to it, while along the way a flashback sequence gives us the story of how Professor X became a cripple (**X-Men** 20, May, 1966).

SMEESH!
SLICE!
...JUST HOW OUR BROTHER MUTANTS REACTED WHEN JOGE CHALMERS USHERED THEM BACK FROM DREAM-LAND!
E. MAY ALTER THE SUB-BC X-MEN...
& COTT'S "THE SENTINEL" ANALOGY SET ME TO PONDERING...
NEVER MIND OUR BROTHER MUTANTS TELL ME ABOUT THE SCARLET WITCH!
SHE'S ONE EARLY BIRD EVEN THE WORMS SET UP TO WATCH
FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME ALL YOUR OLD SPARRING-PARTNERS WERE THERE... EXCEPT MAGNETO AND THE CHANGELING!
HOW DID THEY ESCAPE...? I WONDER...?
PARDON ME IF I DON'T SHARE YOUR CURIOSITY PANDORA
BUT I PREFER TO DWELL ON THOUGHTS OF A ROOMFUL OF RABSCIBLE EX-CELLMATES!
I'LL BE A COLD DAY IN HELSINKI BEFORE ANY OF THEM COMES OUT OF CONCEALMENT AGAIN!
...A THOUGHT WITH WHICH TO REGALE ALEX, DURING HIS POST-OPERATIVE PERIOD...!
© 1965 Marvel Comics Group

This completism, taking every opportunity to add details and fill in background information, was to be a hallmark of Thomas and, to varying degrees, of later writers who came up through fandom. Springing from the careful, almost archival study of comic books, it had the effect of making Mar-

BY WILL JACOBS AND GERARD JONES

THEN THAT'S THE SECRET YOU'VE BEEN HIDING!
YOU DON'T SEARCH FOR MUTANTS AT ALL!
YOU CREATE THEM...OUT OF CAPTURED SAVAGES!
SO YOU KNOW AT LAST!

© 1985 Marvel Comics Group

vel stories appear to be more than entertainment but actual historical documents of some other world. With this perspective came a fascination with comics' past, which Thomas promptly evidenced by resurrecting "a stampede of yesteryear's most sensational super-villains," six old Iron Man and Human Torch villains whom Lee had wisely left forgotten. Thomas set about linking up scattered pieces of the Marvel universe with knowledge and careful thought where Lee did so impulsively. He launched a back-up feature, for example, detailing the origins and early days of the various X-Men, which Lee had left unexplored. Also, with his youth and the contact with teenagers his school-teaching days had given him, he was able to make the speech patterns, activities and musical tastes of his adolescent mutants more convincing than Lee had. Thus, because of his background—although he was still learning the basic tools of storytelling—Thomas became an instant favorite of the hardcore fans.

Sales of **X-Men** sagged steadily, perhaps because of art by Roth, Heck and George Tuska, perhaps because Thomas had yet to hit his stride as entertaining writer. He left the series after two years, and when he returned a year later he was joined by Neal Adams, with the dark, dramatic inking of Tom Palmer (**X-Men** 56, May, 1969). Together they crafted a hard-hitting, suspenseful series about the mutant-hunting Sentinels, one of the very few X-Men stories to make full use of the original theme of persecution, followed by an exotic adventure in a lost jungle world, featuring a rare glimpse into the mind and personality of Magneto (**X-Men** 57-63, June-Dec., 1969). Although these issues combined plot, art and melodrama into some of Marvel's most acclaimed products, even they were not enough to win back the X-Men's vanished readership and prevent their cancellation in 1970. The complex character interactions and harrowing tone of those stories would set the style for an X-Men revival five years later and thus indirectly help change the direction of comics in the late 1970s.

Thomas made more immediate contributions to comics when he took the helm of the Avengers (**Avengers** 35, Dec., 1966). It became apparent quickly that he took comic books seriously not only as historical material but as an artistic medium when he began heightening conflict between the characters and deepening their emotional turmoil. Hawkeye the Marksman received much of his attention, remaining the rebel and misfit of the group but now revealing more complex reasons for his ambivalence, including the torch he carried for the beautiful Russian spy named the Black Widow, who was now turning against her old country and trying to win the trust of SHIELD. Shortly Thomas introduced the Red Guardian, a proud Soviet counterpart of Captain America, who proved to be the Widow's estranged husband. Although the Guardian's goal is to destroy Captain America, in the final story, "The Valiant Also Die," he gives his life to prevent an unconscious Cap from being blown up by a cowardly Russian officer. In the aftermath, the Widow must make peace with her memories and old loyalties, Cap must live with the knowledge that he owes his life to the enemy of his country, and Hawkeye must learn to submerge his pride in his love for the Widow (**Avengers** 43-44, Aug.-Sept., 1967).

By creating these internal dilemmas, raising troubling questions about loyalty and nationalism, and granting

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

About to take over The Hulk, abandoning Alpha Flight and continuing his highly acclaimed Fantastic Four, it's time to

TALK WITH JOHN BYRNE

BY HAL SCHUSTER

© 1985 Marvel Comics Group

John Byrne. Roll it around on your tongue a bit; savor it. This is the name of the most popular comic book artist in America. It is the name of one of the most popular comic book writers. What makes this British-born, Calgary (Canada)-raised Marvel Comics creator so popular? Let's visit for a bit with the Living Dynamo and find out.

The X-Men, where he combined efforts with Chris Claremont (back in the days before Byrne began to write his own work), was the first place that this talent's light began to shine in a way that was seen by all of comic book fandom from coast to coast. His earlier work on such diverse titles as **Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch, Rog—2000, Ghost Rider** (the superhero version) and **Champions** drew little attention. But this book, the showpiece of the Marvel line, was different. After drawing that title for a number of issues he could virtually write his own ticket. And he did.

It was the work of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby that had most captivated him as a child. Years later, he still worships at their shrine. He told Marvel that he wanted to write as well as draw comic books. "I've really been inclined to think of myself as a writer who draws rather than an artist who writes," Byrne

I DON'T THINK SO!
I DO NOT HAVE QUITE THE ARTISTRY OF A SKRULL. BUT I AM EASILY AS ADEPT AT SHAPE-CHANGING.
YOU SEE? NOW SURRENDER, AND WE CAN DISCUSS THIS IN A CIVILIZED FASHION!
DISCUSS? DISCUSS?? THERE IS NOTHING TO DISCUSS. I HAVE FAILED!

Mr. Fantastic demonstrates his power in this scene from John Byrne's Fantastic Four—Byrne endeavors to define and demonstrate each member's individual powers. © 1985 Marvel Comics Group

explains. Now he was to combine his two abiding interests to become the author/artist of the Lee/Kirby flagship title, **The Fantastic Four**.

But the book he took over was no longer the child of Lee and Kirby. "I didn't take over that book. I took over the book that it had been diluted into. If somebody had come to me and said, 'Take over the **Fantastic Four** with issue 101, I would have said, 'No way, I'm not following Stan and Jack.' But they asked me to take over a hundred and thirty-odd issues after Stan and Jack, when it had been diluted (I might say perverted) to the point where I had no qualms at all about taking it over.

"I started out by turning the clock back, so in effect I am taking over with issue 101. Really, nothing has happened since Stan and Jack. I know a lot of writers who handled it in that period have been offended by that approach. The sad thing is that you can ignore a good hundred issues of the **Fantastic Four** because nothing significant happened." This is how Byrne expressed his feelings when I first talked to him in June of 1983.

Almost two years later, he still feels that the definitive Fantastic Four was that of Lee and Kirby. But he does hope "that everything I do is adding something to the mythos of the FF, or at least the ever-popular illusion of change, if nothing else.

"I've been expanding on Sue's role since I started on the book. People are finally starting to notice that. They're not surprised anymore when she takes charge and does things.

"Sue is your basic-issue female character. I've been re-reading the first 20 or so issues recently, and she is very much your standard female character of the early 60's in those books. She's kind of wimpy and her hobbies are reading romance magazines, things like that. She basically had no backbone worth mentioning, so when she did show strength it was an amazing thing and there were neon signs pointing to it:

"Gosh! Look! Sue has hidden strength!"

"Nowadays, women have a more significant role just in day-to-day life. So, obviously, without wanting to change who she is, without saying, 'We have to scrap the character and start from scratch,' I've tried to move her into the 80s, to partially recreate her as an 80s woman. But more, take that original Sue and have her look at the world through 80s eyes. She says, 'Okay, I'm not this wimp whose sole function is to get captured by the bad guys anymore. I'm a strong, self-sufficient member of the group.' When Reed's out of action, Sue becomes the leader of the group, things like that.

"The background on Sue is rather conflicting as far as whether she represents more of an '80s housewife or an '80s career woman. We have a great deal of stuff that tends to suggest she's just this basic housewife type, and yet there are also elements of her background that say she tried out to be a movie star and all kinds of things like that.

"Anybody who's ever had even a brush with show business knows that that's not a field you ever survive in if you don't have a strong core. You get chewed up and spit out in a hurry if you don't have something going for you. Sue was strong enough to survive that.

"The thrust is basically, yes, deep down she would probably prefer to be a wife and mother (that was the approach I took in the 20th Anniversary issue), but she has been thrust into this superhero role and as such is dealing with it. She's not curling up and blowing away, she's saying, 'If I have to

be a superhero I'll be a superhero. I won't sacrifice my femininity or my personal view of the world, but I will certainly adapt them to meet the demands that this new, improved job puts on me.'

"I'm inclined to think that she is the most powerful member of the group. Part of the whole scenario that I just did with the "Dark Invisible Girl" story, was to demonstrate just how powerful that Sue is. She has certain limitations because she's 'one of the good guys,' and cannot utilize her power to its full extent. This is something that most heroes run into: The Thing is always pulling his punches too.

"Sue has this vast power. It's tremendous. And by removing the barriers, by letting malice cut loose with Sue's powerful force, I was able to demonstrate that this is a lady that you don't mess around with if you want to stay healthy.

SILVER ANNIVERSARY THINGS

"We're playing, of course, with The Thing's role in the group. This is building towards the 25th Anniversary issue, which is number 296. He has this orbiting role at the moment—he's never going to be permanently removed from the group as far as I'm concerned. When I wrote him out, the intention was always to bring him back, and for the 25th Anniversary issue. So we had approximately two years (I think it actually works out to 30 issues) that The Thing is out of the book.

"This gave me the opportunity to mess around with the group dynamics. Obviously, She-Hulk presents a different situation for the group than The Thing did. So Reed and Sue and Johnny all react differently to her than they would to The Thing. This enables me to tap into areas of their personalities that perhaps have never been seen before. Sue has never had another woman to relate to in the group, Johnny has never had a sexy lady (other than his sister) to deal with, and just the whole change in the group's dynamics has certainly caused Reed to do some reassessing.

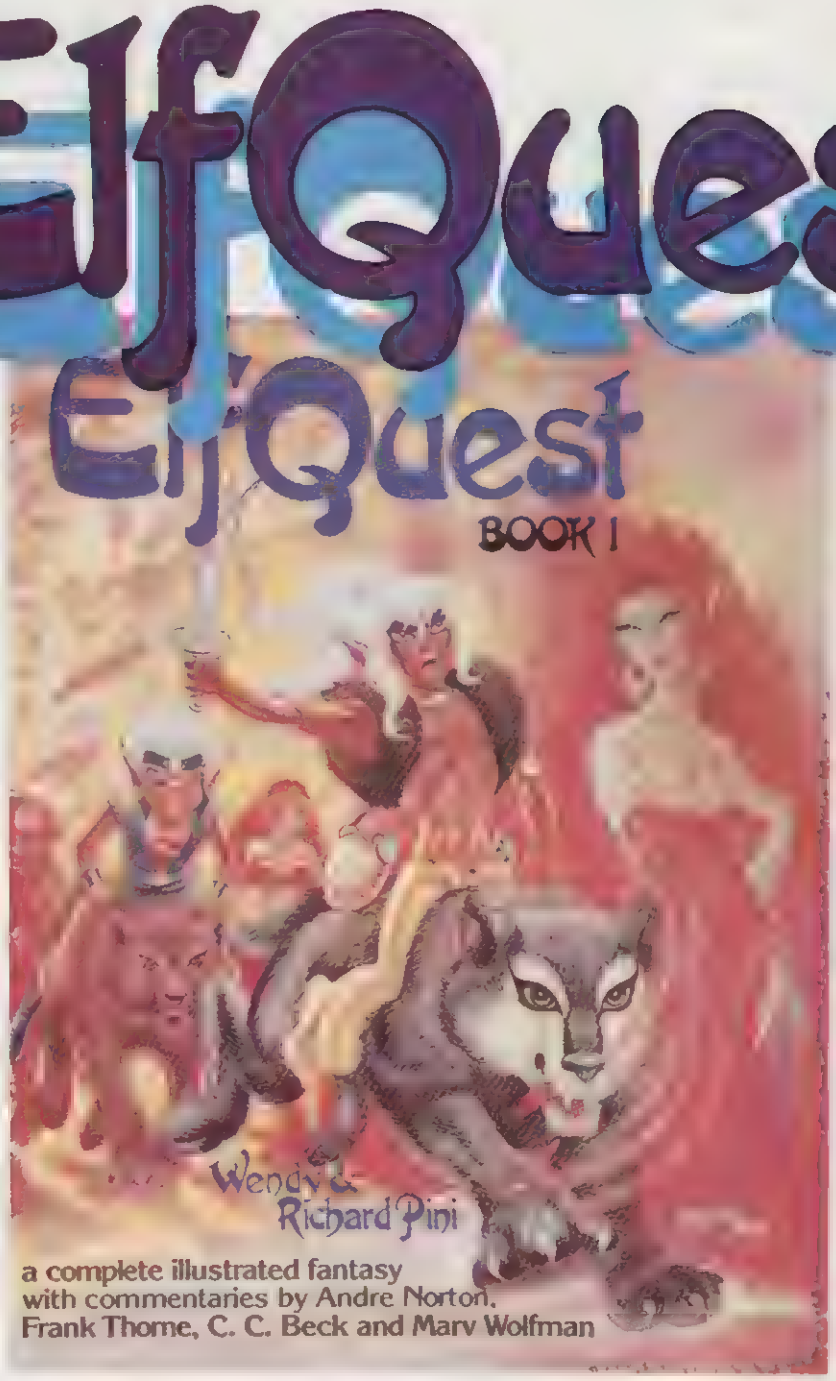
"Breaking The Thing up with Alicia was a step toward changing him back to the tragic character he originally was. This is an ongoing thing that's going to come to a head towards the end of his own series, now that **The Thing** has been cancelled. There will be a 3-5 month break when we won't be seeing him in the Marvel Universe at all. Then he sort of turns up again in 296, in a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 51

Whether drawing The Hulk (top left) Shaman (immediate right) or She Hulk (far right), John Byrne's work is always distinctive

© 1985 Marvel Comics Group

The complete history of



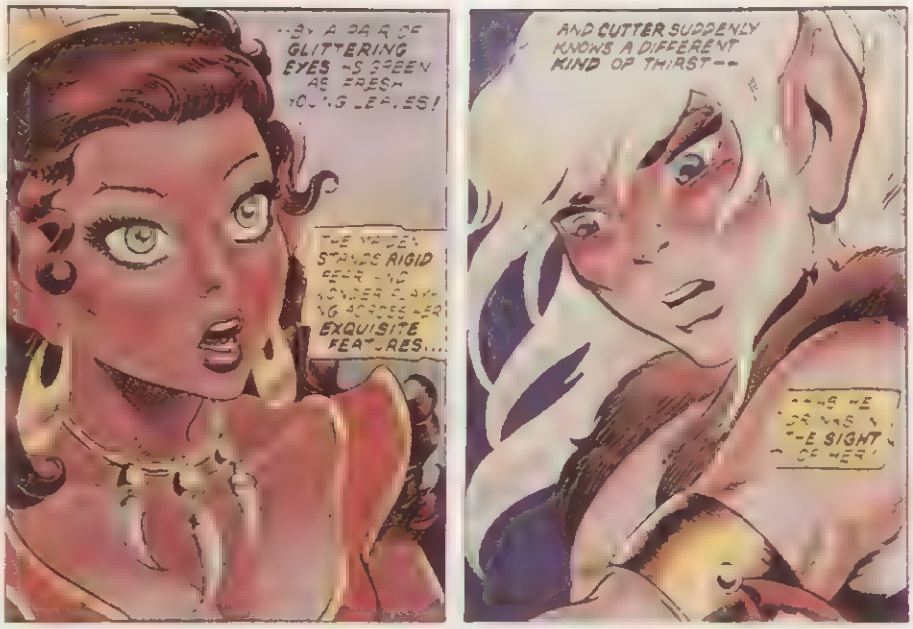
All visuals accompanying this article © 1985 Richard & Wendy Pini

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Elves have held a place in literature and legends since tales were first spun and dreams were first told. Usually they have been portrayed as diminutive creatures of whom little is known. Often they've been portrayed as crafty enemies such as in Poul Anderson's **The Broken Sword** and J. R. R. Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings** (remember, Hobbits are not elves—they're something else altogether).

Comic books had never really delved very deeply into them before the late Seventies, when Doug Moench and Michael Ploog did a short backup strip in a black and white magazine called **The Punisher** which featured elves in a pure fantasy setting. "Weirdworld" would have a brief revival in the early Eighties in one of the greatest non-events in comics history.

The people who proved that fantasy could become a success in the medium of comic books were Wendy and Richard Pini, the creators of **Elfquest**. Wendy Pini (formerly a well-known fan artist under the name Wendy Fletcher and **Red Sonja** in Frank Thorne's convention-pleasing shows) had been very interested in elves and fantasy even before she saw **Wizards**. This Ralph Bakshi filmfest of imagination and animation was



The maiden meets the hero and magic fills the air in Wendy and Richard Pini's tale of elves, love, war and fantasy

amazing for how much it tried and succeeded in, despite its mixed bag of animation, rotoscoping and panoramic paintings. It was a fusion of energy mixed with desires carried out on a limited budget and it still stands up as being superior to most other animated films made in the Seventies. This one movie showed that there were people out there who viewed elves as characters worthy of consideration.

While Wendy enjoyed the portrayals of elves in Walt Disney's **Peter Pan** and Osamu Tezuka's **Alakazam the Great**, it was **Wizards** which brought the idea explosively to life for her. Inspired, she gathered her scraps of ideas together and began assembling them into a cohesive whole. From this came **Elfquest**.

Wendy and Richard Pini created a presentation package in April 1977 and sent it to several publishers. Mike Friedrich of **Star*Reach** and Bud Plant, publisher of **The First Kingdom**, expressed interest but were not willing to commit it to their schedule at that time. Neither Marvel nor DC felt that a comic book about elves would do well commercially.

Finally, the Pinis got a commitment from Tim Donahue, publisher of a small line named Power Comics. But they ran into problems here. They had been told that the first issue would be printed in color, so Wendy did the artwork with that in mind. When it was published in February 1978 as **Fantasy Quarterly 1 featuring Elfquest**, the result was very disappointing to them because the artwork intended for color looked poor in black & white. Here and there were spots which suffered, such as the huge blank sky with the moon on page one. They also had trouble getting paid and getting the artwork returned.

THE TRAGIC TRUTH ABOUT FANTASY QUARTERLY?

As independent publishers go, Power Comics (later the Independent Publishers Syndicate) was pretty small. They had put out a few black & white comics with titles such as **Bluebird, Cobalt Blue** and **Nightwitch**. Nothing they did aroused very much excitement, much less good sales.

The Pinis found themselves frustrated with Donahue and his small publishing outfit, and in fact finally regarded him as a less-than-reputable operator. But the other side has never been heard.

Tim Donahue has remained a notorious, almost shadowy figure in the history of **Elfquest**. He's always the guy who jerked the Pinis around, but finally more or less delivered on everything promised. Donahue himself has never been heard from, until I met and talked with him in 1983. This took place in San Diego, where he wound up after going to work for the Crown Books chain and began opening stores for them around the country. When we talked he was helping manage a comic book store—a partnership that later dissolved with at least as much acrimony as the **Fantasy Quarterly** debacle.

There is no way that I can state unequivocally that everything he told me was the absolute truth. I can only relate my own feelings and observations as I listened. His story deserves to be heard.

At the time Donahue committed to **Elfquest**, Power Comics was not doing well. Fandom had not welcomed his books with open arms, but he still had a dream of creating an independent company to rival Marvel and DC. He also wanted to provide a stage on which new talent could emerge. His goals were the same as those later, more successfully realized by First Comics, Eclipse and Pacific.

Elfquest was to be the first color title, but as the publishing date approached the money began to run out. Because he believed in the book, Donahue published it in black & white rather than not at all. When he paid the printer for **Fantasy Quarterly**, Donahue found himself broke.

His business setbacks were compounded by a crushing personal tragedy when his wife and young son were killed in an automobile accident. It's easy to say that this sounds conveniently facile, but I was the one sitting there listening to him reluctantly tell me this story. I heard the tremor in his voice when he recalled an event that was five years in his past. His eyes were what really told me the story, and I'll never forget what I saw in them.

It was after this tragedy that Donahue threw in the towel. He quite literally skipped town, leaving a warehouse full of Power Comics which he owed storage charges on. It was another dealer who, in 1979, bought these books at auction and began selling them. His method of distribution was to insist that, in order to get any **Fantasy Quarterly**, you also had to buy a number of other Power Comics titles. They were sold cheaply enough that dealers could sell **Fantasy Quarterly** for cover price. It was shortly after this that the book climbed to $5.00 a copy, then later to at least $25.00 per.

Tim Donahue has never met the Pinis, but he has seen them. He was in the audience at a San Diego con in 1981, during one of their slide shows. Donahue listened to Wendy describe him in unflattering terms. But he didn't have the courage to introduce himself, or to try to explain his side of the story. The past held too many bitter

memories for him, as it did for the Pinis.

THE PHENOMENON BEGINS

With **Fantasy Quarterly** still an uncomfortably recent memory, Wendy and Richard decided to publish **Elfquest** 2 themselves. They borrowed money and printed 10,000 copies of the second issue, which appeared in October of 1978. The wholesalers, Bud Plant and Phil Seuling, bought most of the print run, allowing the Pinis to repay their loan within a month and begin work on number 3. Things were definitely looking up.

VOLL SUMMONS ONE OF THE GLIDERS TO THE DAIS
THIS IS KUREEL.
YOUR FOLK KILLED THE FLEDGELING WHICH WOULD HAVE BECOME HIS BOND-BIRD.
I'M SORRY FOR THAT. WE'RE HUNTERS.
STRONGBOW SHOT THE BIRD DOWN FOR FOOD.
HE DIDN'T KNOW
HE SEEMS EVEN OLDER THAN SAWW!
A CLOAK MADE OF SO MANY YEARS MUST WEIGH HEAVILY ON HIM
HE WEARS IT WITHOUT JOY.
THE CHOSEN EIGHT WHO RIDE THE GREAT BIRDS ARE HUNTERS TOO.
AND WAIT LONGER STILL, UNTIL HIS NEW MOUNT IS FULL-FLEDGED AND READY TO FLY THE HUNT.
BUT KUREEL MUST WAIT NOW, FOR THE NEXT HATCHING
THEN LET MY TRIBE GO--
AND WE'LL BRING YOU MEAT TO MAKE UP FOR THE BIRD'S DEATH.
THAT HARDLY SEEMS ADEQUATE ATONEMENT, LORD VOLL...
I WOULD SAY THAT A LIFE FOR A LIFE IS MORE IN ORDER!

Two different civilizations of elves confront each other—first in fear later in friendship and understanding

They again sold 10,000 copies of issues 4 and 5. By the time the fifth book was published, other distributors wanted to carry the title. The print run was increased to 15,000 copies and kept growing due to the snowballing interest in the series. Seuling and Plant continued to buy all copies. It was around this time, as other distributors wanted to handle **Elfquest**, that the Pinis altered the publishing arrangement they had with their two original partners. While Bud Plant agreed to their new terms, Phil Seuling did not. In fact, shortly before this issue arose, Seuling told me in no uncertain terms that because he bought the print run of each issue this made **him** the actual publisher, an assertion I'm sure would have amazed the Pinis.

When the Pinis asked to change the arrangement, Seuling believed that he had been betrayed and acted accordingly. He refused to buy any copies under the new arrangement. It took several issues for him to realize that he was only hurting himself by cutting himself off from the success of **Elfquest**. The magazine continued to thrive without him.

Perhaps the rarest **Elfquest** oriented magazine, next to **Fantasy Quarterly 1**, is one that I actually published—issue 146 of the fanzine **The Rocket's Blast—Comicollector** (aka The RBCC). It came out in December 1978 and featured an original wraparound cover and centerspread by Wendy based on scenes from **Elfquests** 1 and 15 (when 15 was still years away from being drawn—that's how far ahead they had already plotted the saga). It also featured a short article by Wendy about the strip's creation as well as my own review of issue 2. I was an early supporter of the series and had commissioned the artwork and the article at the 1978 San Diego Con, before number 2 had even been published. My own energetic support (which included an enthusiastic review of **Fantasy Quarterly** when it first came out) was part of the early **Elfquest** groundswell.

Another rare collectible is the magazine **Incredible Science Fiction 1** (August 1978). Although it only has a two-page article on Wendy, one of those pages sports a lovely full color drawing of a blue-skinned warrior woman.

DARE TO BE CUTE

Elfquest managed to do what no other comic book succeeded in doing—attracting science fiction fans. This is by no means the first time a creator has tried to accomplish this feat, nor will it be the last. But so far, it's the only time it has worked.

Word of mouth won over regular comic book fans. The writing began to attract the fantasy fans. This was a fully realized fantasy world which dealt on much more subtle levels than comic books usually try for. Reading one is much more like reading a book than a comic book. It is a carefully refined and defined adult fantasy.

One stumbling block for some people is that it's about cute elves. Wendy may draw mean elves or evil elves, but only the trolls are ever ugly. People taking a cursory glance often decide that the slick, classic portrayal of elves is much too cute for their digestion. Even Marion Zimmer Bradley has never read an **Elfquest** because she doesn't like comic books or elves. Ultimately, many people with similar opinions did give the book a try and now form a part

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE WITHOUT THIS, FROSTY MANE!
AND THIS!
HA HA HA HA! REMEMBER LIFEMATE?
...THE NIGHT YOU FIRST SAW ME DANCE?
THE WHIRLING, STAMPING, RHYTHMIC DANCING— THE FLICKERING FIRELIGHT AND SCENT-HEAVY AIR STIR THE ELVES ALREADY HEIGHTENED SENSES--

Elfquest is a lusty saga of war and love in which the Pinis pull few punches

of the series' most devoted following.

Wendy's art does depict an awful lot of cute elves, but it expresses much more than this. Unlike **most** comic book artists, she is capable of portraying a wide array of emotions with her characters and can change facial expressions in subtle ways to communicate a conflicting slate of emotions that a character may be experiencing. **Elfquest** is not just another boy's adventure comic book. It deals with emotional conflicts.

Wendy Pini believes that art and story are **equally** important. The ways in which she uses the one to complement the other are textbook examples of the comic strip at the top of its form. When I received a review copy of **Fantasy Quarterly** in the mail in 1978, I had never heard of Wendy Pini. It was just another zine to review. When I began to read it I was amazed by and quickly caught up in the sweep of the narrative. I was not only impressed by the art, I **cared** about the characters even though I had never heard of them before. They became more than just two-dimensional images. They actually lived and breathed. It takes no small talent to accomplish this.

The only point in the entire series at which Wendy's artistic talents were not up to the task was the one time when she had to depict a monster. In **Elfquest** 4 ("Wolfsong") a flashback dealing with Cutter's father reveals the deadly battle with Madcoil, a creature wrought of magic when a battling sabre-tooth cat and a huge serpent became fused into one shambling horror. The creature rendered by Wendy is just not frightening. It really doesn't look like anything. As monsters go it's a rather crude concept which projects none of the horror the story attributes to it.

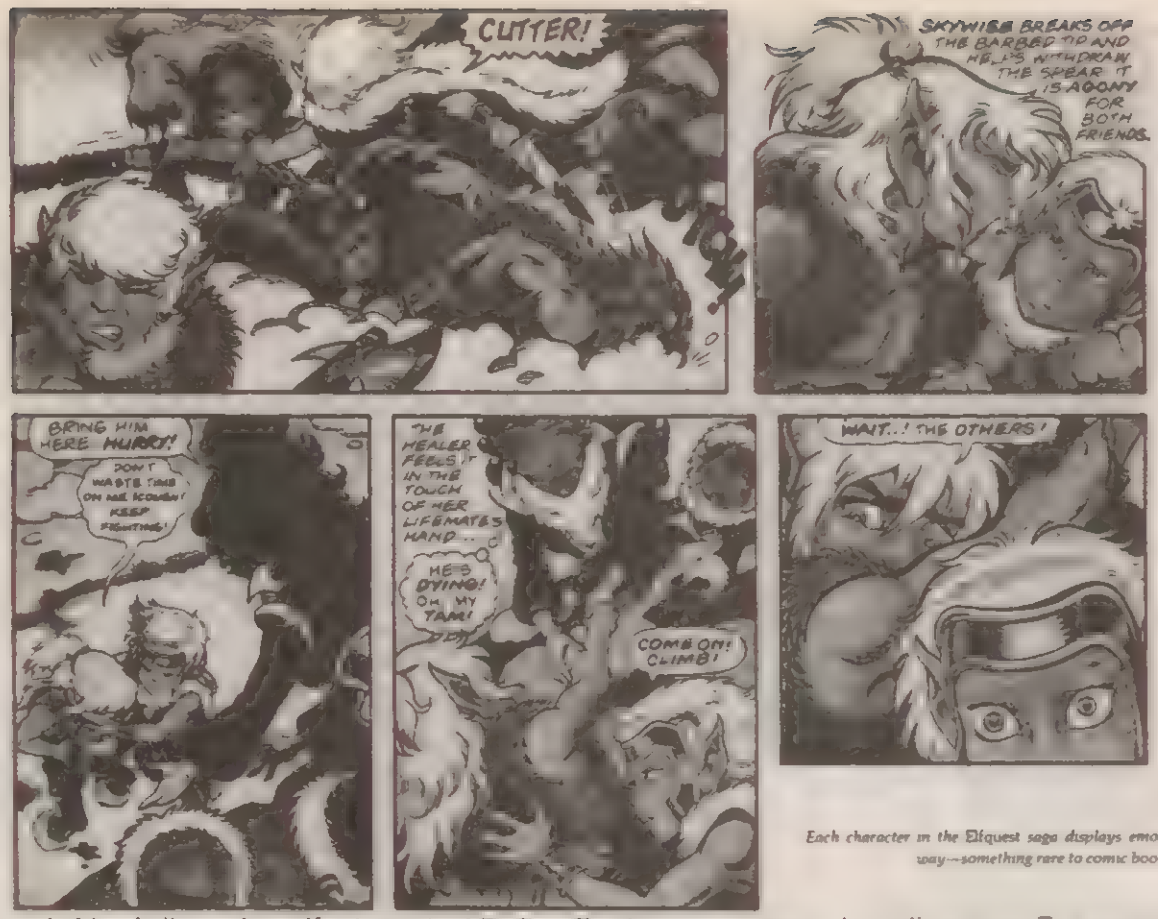
In order to draw monsters convincingly, you have to understand what has gone before and what made the best of them effective. I somehow doubt that Wendy Pini was ever a horror movie fan. She doesn't understand that a monster can convey primal feelings just as her elf characters do. Only these would be dark images of decay and death which touch our subconscious and communicate very real fears drawn from our inner minds. Steve Bissette communicates these images in **Swamp Thing**. An artist much closer to the rendering technique employed by Pini is Brian Bolland. In the "Judge Death" stories he drew for the British **Dredd** strip, Bolland portrays horror in a slick, detailed yet very disturbing form. He succeeds in capturing with pen and ink what Wendy could only render with words.

In hundreds of pages of art, this is the only genuine weakness that Wendy has revealed. It is not surprising that she never attempted to draw a monster again.

CONTROVERSY: WHEN IDEALS CLASH WITH REALITY

Wendy's inability to depict the horrific doubtless lulled her readers into believing that she wouldn't do anything really startling or dangerous in the series. Her stories were emotionally powerful, but they were "clean", not disturbing, emotions. We felt a release, rather than the effects of a shocking confrontation, after reading.

In co-plotting **Elfquest** with her husband Richard, and in writing and drawing hundreds of pages of story, her talents had begun to stretch and


CUTTER!
SKYWISE BREAKS OFF THE BARBED TIP AND HE...'S WITHDRAW THE SPEAR IT IS AGONY FOR BOTH FRIENDS.
BRING HIM HERE HURRY!
DON'T WASTE TIME ON ME, SCOUNDREL! KEEP FIGHTING!
THE HEALER FEELS IT IN THE TOUCH OF HER LIFEMATE'S HAND...
HE'S DYING! OH, MY TAM!
COME ON! CLIMB!
WAIT...! THE OTHERS!

Each character in the Elfquest saga displays emotions in a realistic way—something rare to comic books

grow. She needed to challenge herself in order to maintain the intense spirit of commitment necessary to complete an over six hundred page comic book saga.

In issue 15, "The Quest Usurped," the expected approach of a bright, uplifting climax is shattered when an important supporting character is brutally murdered. The elves find themselves abandoned on the deadly, icy wastes in a duel to the death with the most brutal trolls they have ever encountered. The palace intrigue and character revelations of the previous few issues are suddenly replaced by an intense battle. Characters suffer and die in realistic and frightening manners. Instead of the boring fisticuffs of most comic books, here the battle is once again much closer in style to what you would expect to encounter in a novel. The main character, Cutter, tries valiantly to protect his tribe even though he is quickly becoming too weak to defend himself. The battle and the nearly mortal injury sustained by Cutter are rendered in a cinematic pace which cuts quickly from motion to motion. This is the way a film is edited to communicate action and impact while maintaining flow from one scene to another. Wendy Pini is at the height of her powers, the imagery is brutal and honest while its effectiveness comes from the realistic responses of the characters. The elves are suffering and dying in the face of superior forces. It is a powerful and startling sequence, equal to the best moments in the early issues.

But not all the fans thought so. That the readers had developed their own proprietary interest in the characters was revealed by one letter in response to issue fifteen (which was printed in the letter column of sixteen): "When you published **Elfquest**, the elves became ours too; all of us who love them. And I do love them; they're very real to me." But the kicker was when the fan stated: "I don't read **Elfquest** for reality. I read it for escape." To their credit, some fans congratulated the Pinis for dealing with situations in the story honestly. But others screamed their anger. They read **Elfquest** as a lift, not to see characters die. At least one reader claimed to have torn up his copy of fifteen.

Sniping at the Pinis over the graphic violence was like a pebble in a pond compared to the outpouring of wrath over an even briefer scene in issue seventeen, "The First War." The elves (adults only!) are engaged in a war dance the night before they are to go into battle and possible death. It climaxes in, well, an orgy. For many readers, the breaking point is when Cutter allows his wife to couple off-stage with Rayek, an old rival. Some called it "elf-swapping". Instead of seeing the nobility the Pinis intend in Cutter's action, they saw depravity. (Editor's note: While understanding what the Pinis intended in trying to show the mores of a different civilization and species, he must admit to a sense of shock and disapproval with the action.) They applied their Twentieth Century, Earth morals to an alien civilization on another world. While it's written and read by Earth folk, the elves are not us. When you get into the realm of sexual attitudes they cannot be measured against us. It was Robert Heinlein who once said, "Tribal customs must not be mistaken for laws of nature."

ELVES ARE PEOPLE, TOO

The characters of **Elfquest** are many and varied. The personalities shape the stories and make them important to the readers, even beyond Wendy's superb graphics.

Cutter: The main character and chief of the tribe of elves known as the Wolfriders. He is a young chief because his parents were killed by the thing known as Madcoil six years

The entire tribe gathers in sorrow at a touching moment in the Pinis' fantasy

before the story opens. Cutter ascended to the position of chief when he led the Wolfriders in their mission of revenge against the monster. He is a powerful fighter and extremely devoted to his people. He has known only hardship and turmoil and thus tends to regard violence as the first choice rather than the last. His temperament is broadened by the knowledge gained throughout the series.

Skywise: He is Cutter's best friend, advisor and confidante. His is a bright personality as opposed to Cutter's inner brooding. He wonders about the points of light in the sky and is the first elf who ever did so. In their first adventure he acquired a piece of lodestone which fell from the sky. He wears this primitive compass around his neck like a talisman.

Leta: Introduced in the second issue, she becomes Cutter's lifemate. She is a healer, one who can mend the broken bodies of her fellows. She is older and wiser than Cutter but she respects his own wisdom, acquired as it was in a world harsher than what she had known prior to embarking on the quest.

Rayek: Introduced in the second issue, he is Cutter's rival for Leta. He then goes off on his own personal quest, to emerge much later in the series as a character who is quite different in important ways.

There are other supporting characters such as Redlance and Nightfall, who are lifemates. There's Scouter and Dewshine, Strongbow and Moonshade, Rainsong and Woodlock and many others.

One character who appeared now and again is a troll named Picknose. The name is supposed to refer to the size and shape of the troll's ungainly nose. But the image brought to mind by the name is something else again and shows a sly sense of humor at work in the series.

What makes **Elfquest** work is the writing. The characters have small as well as grand encounters and they relate to one another in very identifiable ways.

In an interview in **The Comics Journal** 63, Wendy explained the philosophy and the approach that she and Richard Pini used in writing the series:

"The core of **Elfquest** is very delicate. It's a fantasy. **Elfquest** is almost a symbolic autobiography of mine. Many of the incidents that happen in **Elfquest** are symbolic representations of things that have happened to me or to me and Richard. Quite literally some of the dialogue has been spoken by either Richard or me at certain times. We draw from our life experiences and translate it into this beautiful fantasy. And I think this is one of the reasons that **Elfquest** rings so true and has proved to most of our readers to be so refreshing in its originality—because it comes from us and our life experiences rather than tipping its hat to preexisting fantasies like Dunsany or Tolkien or even the Nordic myths, which Tolkien drew on. So the core of **Elfquest** is very fragile and very personal and we really have to hang onto and protect that."

ELFQUEST: MARVEL STYLE

While Marvel's "Weirdworld" predated **Elfquest**, it might have lain forgotten had not Wendy and Richard's series captured the attention of fandom. In 1979 Marvel produced a lavish three-issue magazine version of "Weirdworld" called "Warriors of the Shadow Realm" and it was relentlessly awful. Despite some stunning coloring, the artwork looked as though it was created on an assembly line. It lacked personality. A deadly sameness consumed it in the second issue. The third issue was anticlimactic. The writing

CUTTER GAZES WITH A BLEND OF AMUSEMENT AND AWE AT HIS ENIGMATIC LITTLE SON.
AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT ANY MALE CUB OF MINE WOULD TAKE AFTER OLD BEARCLAW!
BUT IT'S EMBER WHO'LL BE CHIEF OF THE WOLF-RIDERS SOMEDAY!
YOU SUNTOP
I'LL BE WHAT I'LL BE!
YOU'LL BE QUIET!!
THISTLES AND PRICKLE-PEARS, LEETAH!
DON'T YOUR CHILDREN EVER SLEEP?!
VERY LITTLE, DEAR SISTER!
THE NIGHT IS IN THEIR BLOOD!
"THE NIGHT"— HMPH!! IT'S ALL YOUR WOLFRIDER'S FAULT!
NEXT THING YOU KNOW HE'LL HAVE THEM RUNNING ON ALL FOURS AND HOWLING AT THE MOONS!
SHENSHEN DOESN'T EXACTLY THINK THE WORLD OF ME, DOES SHE?
NOT SINCE YOU DIMMED HER LIGHT THE DAY SUNTOP AND EMBER WERE BORN

Through the course of the adventure Cutter matures, marries and has children It is his family that provides the central focus of the story

was soulless and pedestrian—the worst Tolkien imitation yet produced. While the author, Doug Moench, had never read Tolkien, he was certainly aware of what it was all about. Had he read Tolkien, he might have avoided the clumsy parallels which existed in his plot. Even that might have been overcome had the characters had life. In the five years since it has appeared, Doug Moench has managed to avoid being interviewed about it. When asked what she thought at the time she saw it, Wendy Pini replied, "I cried because of what it could have been."

And so, Marvel Comics, which in 1977 rejected **Elfquest** as being uncommercial, has come to realize that while being different from what they were accustomed to publishing, **Elfquest** has energy and talent.

The first issue of **Epic Illustrated** featured a full color story by Wendy Pini which took place in the world of **Elfquest**. The story actually tied in to a later issue of the series.

All twenty issues have already been gathered in four stunning full-color volumes published by Donning. These are highly recommended as the best format to enjoy **Elfquest** in as Wendy has one of the finest color senses of any artist in the business.

Beyond the Marvel Comics reissue of the series, **Elfquest** continues to exist in the form of a role-playing game, figurines, T-shirts, a paperback novel and a possible animated feature. Fans appear in costume as the characters at conventions across the country. One of the earliest such occurrence was at the 1981 San Diego Comicon when two large groups, totalling about fifty people, each garbed themselves as the Wolfriders with very authentic looking handmade garb. Even the Pinis were amazed by this. (This is perhaps an ironic development coming from a series created by an artist who made her first splash in fandom showing up at conventions garbed as Red Sonja!)

Elfquest has completed the current cycle. The future may hold additional stories as well as the hoped for **Elfquest** animated motion picture. At present Wendy Pini is concentrating her attention on other projects which may prove just as exciting, so long as her fans allow her to expand her artistic horizons beyond elfin kind. It would be a shame if Wendy's new projects face a hard time just because they aren't **Elfquest**. Wendy has proven her creativity and how far she can take a concept. I'd very much like to see where she can journey with still other ideas. That is, after all, what imagination is all about.

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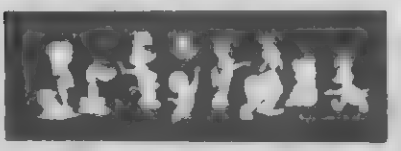


go around with ideas racing through my imagination constantly." "He's a creative madman when he gets going," says Spears. After Ruby comes up with rough concepts for shows, both he and Spears work on development of the series towards their final formats. "In this way we work together, complementing each other's creative abilities," Spears points out.

Joe Ruby credits Joseph Barbera and Fred Silverman with helping him develop his creativity. "These were the people who demonstrated to me how to take ideas and make them into shows."

Ruby-Spears became a leading supplier of network animated programming in 1983 with orders for series and specials from all three networks. The studio's animated version of **Mr. T** on NBC led the Saturday morning schedule for the entire season. New episodes of **Alvin and the Chipmunks** have consistently held the two or three spot for two seasons. Recognizing the Chipmunks' strong appeal, NBC has ordered two primetime specials. One was aired on Valentine's Day in 1984 and the other features the Chipmunks in search of their real mother for early spring in 1985.

CBS ordered an hour block of **The Saturday Morning Supercade** featuring animated versions of popular video games with new episodes for 1983 and sweetened the show with new elements for 1984. (But new shows will doubtlessly take the place of this since arcade games are a fad whose time has come and gone.)

Ruby-Spears is also producing specials for syndication. The success of "Rose-Petal Place", starring Marie Osmond as the singing flower character in 1984 has led to a second special for spring of 1985. The studio produced **Robo Force**, a half-hour special which aired in December 1984, as well as a holiday special for ABC based on the Cabbage Patch Kids.

"It was difficult," said Ruby, "being the new kids on the block. We didn't have existing properties and were challenged to come up with our own creations.

"As we build our library of characters, we enjoy greater selling success. It is obvious that the networks have realized that there's another creative force to tap and are coming to us to deliver them shows that attract and hold viewers."

Following are the Ruby-Spears shows currently airing on Saturday morning, including the number of episodes of each which have been made.

DRAGON'S LAIR
(ABC—13 hours)

Directors Charles A. Nichols, Rudy Larriva
Story Editor..... Rick Merwin

CAST
Dirk..... Bob Sarlatte
Daphne..... Ellen Gerstell
King Ethelred..... Fred Travelina
Timothy..... Michael Mish
Singe..... Arthur Berghardt

ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS
(NBC—13 half hours)

Directors. Charles A Nichols, Rudy Larriva
Story Editors..... Cliff Ruby, Elana Lesser

CAST
Alvin, Simon, David.. Ross Bagdasarian Jr.
Theodore..... Janice Karman

SPACE ACE
(CBS—13 eleven minute episodes)

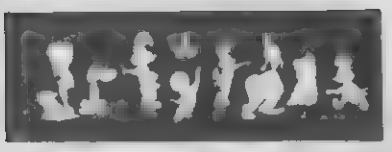
Directors Charles A. Nichols, John Kimball
Story Editor..... David Villaire

CAST
Ace..... Jim Piper
Kimberly..... Nancy CartWright
Dexter..... Sparky Marcus
Space Marshall Vaughn.. Peter Renedy
Borf..... Arthur Berghardt

MR. T
(NBC—13 half hours)

Directors Norm McCabe, John Kimball
Story Editors. Cliff Ruby, Elana Lesser, Marty Pasko

CAST
Mr. T..... Mr. T
Robin..... Amy Linker
Spike..... Teddy S. Field, III
Woody..... Phillip LaMarr
Jeff..... Shawn Lieber
Miss Bisby..... Takayo Doran



TURBO TEEN
(ABC—13 half hours)

Directors. Charles A. Nichols, Rudy Larriva
Story Editor . . . . . Michael Maurer

CAST
Bret Matthews. . . . . Michael Mish
Pattie. . . . . Pamela Hayden
Alex. . . . . T K. Carter
Eddie. . . . . Pat Fraley
Flip. . . . . Frank Welker

Q*BERT
(CBS—6 eleven minute episodes)

Part of the **Saturday Supercade**

Director. . . . . Charles A. Nichols
Story Editor. . . . . Gary Greenfield

CAST
Q*Bert. . . . . Billy Bowles
Q*Tee, Q*Val. . . . . Robbie Lee
Q*Bertha, Q*Mom, Viper. . . Julie Dees
Q*Bit. . . . . Dick Beals
Q*Mungus, Q*Ball, Q*Dad Coily, Ugg, Wrongway, Sam, Slick. . . Frank Welker

KANGAROO
(CBS—13 eleven minute episodes)

Part of the **Saturday Supercade**

Directors. . Charles Nichols, John Kimball
Story Editor. . . . . Cliff Roberts

CAST
Katy. . . . . Mea Martineau
Joey. . . . . David Mendenhall
Mr. Friendly . . . . . Arthur Berghardt
Monkey Biz Gang Frank Welker, Pat Fraley

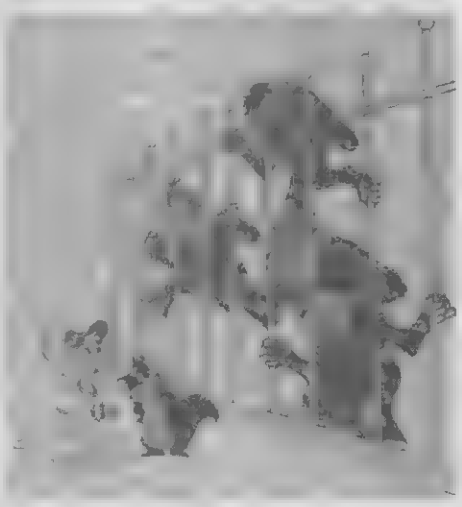
DONKEY KONG
(CBS—13 eleven minute episodes)

Part of the **Saturday Supercade**

Director. . . . . Charles A. Nichols
Story Editor. . . . . Michael Maurer

CAST
Donkey Kong . . . . . Soupy Sales
Pauline . . . . . Judy Strangis

Mario. . . . . Peter Cullen



Today, Kenneth Spears works with the production and business side of the company while Ruby concentrates on developing new series concepts and working with writers. Joe Ruby assigns his ideas for new properties to his staff, which allows him an opportunity to expand his range of development. "Where I once worked on a single idea with a writer, now I can have ten different writers with which I can work on my ideas," he says. "In this business you can never rest on your laurels. You must plan for tomorrow or the industry will rush past you. I have many ideas for characters and stories swimming in my head constantly," Ruby adds. He hopes to branch out into prime time live-action series and theatricals.

But Kenneth Spears wants to make any such expansion gradual and done in stages which will capitalize on their strengths. Spears believes that the hallmark of their shows is high adventure, action and comedy. "There aren't many who do what we do," Spears states, "so we aren't going to scatter ourselves about trying to sell all kinds of things and hitting on nothing."

This methodical approach still will not limit their ambitions, says Ruby, but rather it will give them a foot in the door where they can eventually pitch ideas for live-action series or feature films.

"In the future, the needs of television may change," Spears observes, "and as a production company, we will try to fill those needs."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

SILVER AGE

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heroic proportions to a communist, Thomas deepened Lee's emotional content, adding an air of profundity to Marvel's impetuous character development. He also forged a flowery, self-important writing style that underlined his serious intentions ("Never, accursed one," cries the Guardian at his death, "not till the heavens crumble, shall Captain America be killed by one so craven as you!"). Literary references and philosophic conversations gave collegiate readers something to chew on, and an increasingly learned tone in the letters pages suggested that such readers were taking notice.

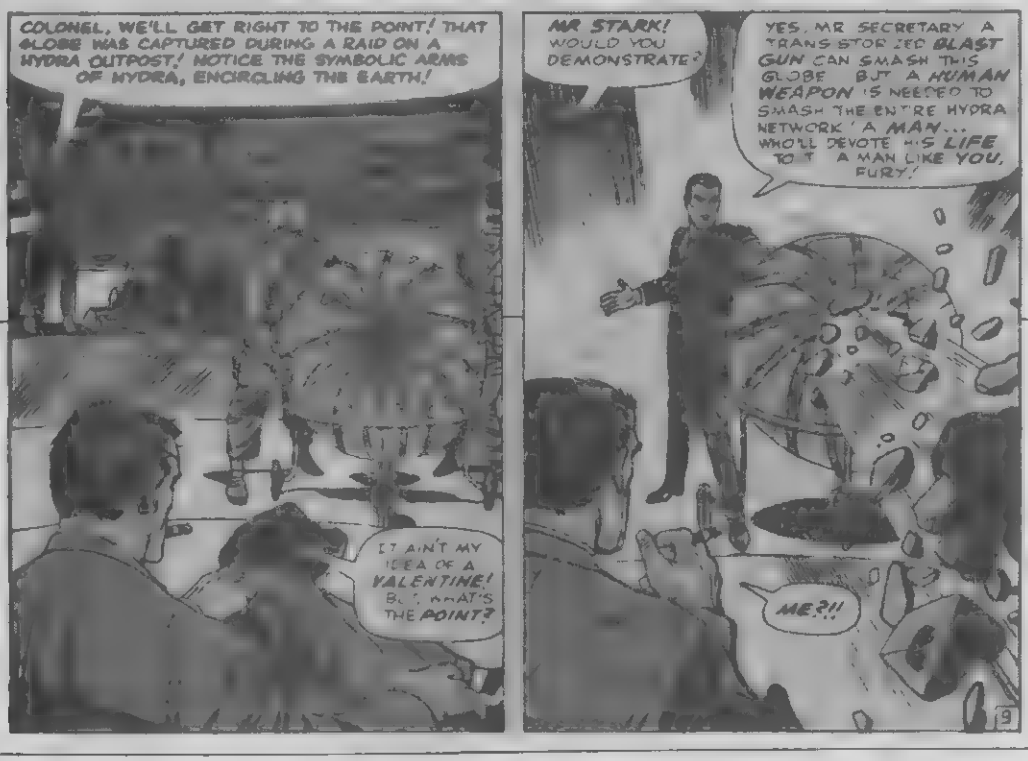
Changes in Avengers membership gave Thomas opportunities to tackle new themes. He used Goliath and the Wasp to try his hand at some heavy marital drama, culminating in the nervous breakdown that caused Goliath to take a new identity, Yellowjacket, and temporarily turn against his teammates. Thor's rival Hercules joined, for some mythological content, and the Black Panther enabled Thomas to grapple directly with racial themes. But the most important new Avenger was a sensitive android called the Vision. His abilities were to turn intangible and fire bolts of force from his head, but his powers were of far less interest than his feelings.

With his plastic body and mechanical voice, the Vision is apparently without emotion, but somehow in his creation he was given human memories and, as a consequence, human feelings. His uncertainty about his true nature fills him with an inexpressible agony. Soon he learns that his brainwaves were taken—in a distinctly Thomas twist—from those of a dead superhero from 1964 called Wonder Man. Though eased by this knowledge, he is still troubled about his place in human society. His brain, he notes, "is not truly a brain at all, but a maze of printed circuits...I wonder...is it possible to be...'basically human?' " The Avengers reassure him of his humanity and welcome him to their ranks, drawing a tear from his synthetic eye and thus the title of the story: "Even an Android Can Cry!" (**Avengers** 58, Nov., 1968).

With the mystery-filled origin of the Vision, Thomas showed himself in possession of imagination, emotional force and plotting talent well able to flesh out his thorough understanding of comics. Although the character's confusion was eventually to break down into self-pity (particularly in an interminably frustrated romance with the Scarlet Witch that would drag on for a decade), and his tragic alienation was to be badly overused, his early appearances brought a new weight and substance to comic book characterization and emotional drama. Thomas, like Lee before him, overstated his themes to get them across, often to the point of mawkishness. But the popularity of **The Avengers** demonstrated undeniably that the comic book medium did have room for thoughts far more ambitious and intelligent than editors had ever assumed.

Thomas was aided on **The Avengers** by the arrival, soon after his own, of penciller John Buscema. Buscema had been one of Lee's favorite young pencillers in the early 1950s, but he had left comics during their shaky years for the more secure field of advertising. Back at now-prosperous Marvel, he proved to be a steady, prolific worker whose productivity would prove very valuable as the company grew. He had a bold, clear style full of thickly-muscled characters in tense, dramatic poses. He used broadly twisted hands and facial features to give impact to Thomas' emotional scenes. He helped Thomas further with his custom of rarely placing more than one or two figures in a panel, leaving out background characters altogether, which prevented the scripter from going overboard on his dialogue. Soon he incorporated a number of Jack Kirby's action techniques into his art, combining the best of Marvel's melodrama and fight scenes.

Perhaps Marvel's strongest creative force in the late 1960s, although far less prolific than Thomas, was writer/artist Jim Steranko. Steranko was an artist of diverse interests and abilities, trying his hand through the years at book cover illustration, advertising design, writing and publishing. Comics would never be his sole interest, but he was fascinated with their history and attracted to the notion of telling stories through pictures. He had read a number of Marvel comics and been deeply impressed with Lee's creativity and openness to change. Lee in turn was immediately bowled over by Steranko's work; according to the artist, Lee told him, "We don't have


COLONEL, WE'LL GET RIGHT TO THE POINT! THAT GLOBE WAS CAPTURED DURING A RAID ON A HYDRA OUTPOST! NOTICE THE SYMBOLIC ARMS OF HYDRA, ENCIRCLING THE EARTH!
IT AIN'T MY IDEA OF A VALENTINE! BUT WHAT'S THE POINT?
MR STARK! WOULD YOU DEMONSTRATE?
YES, MR SECRETARY A TRANSISTORIZED BLAST GUN CAN SMASH THIS GLOBE BUT A HUMAN WEAPON IS NEEDED TO SMASH THE ENTIRE HYDRA NETWORK! A MAN... WHO'LL DEVOTE HIS LIFE TO IT! A MAN LIKE YOU, FURY!
ME?!!

Jim Steranko's Nick Fury Agent of S H I E L D *and* X-Men *helped pave the way for more innovative page designs*

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anything for you, but you're too good to get away."

Lee started Steranko pencilling and inking details inside Kirby's layouts on **Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD**, but soon gave him control of all drawing and writing on the series (**Strange Tales** 155, Apr., 1967). Exaggerating the spy-movie elements of the strip into an uninhibited, slightly facetious, James Bond-style romp, he kept the stories sophisticated and fresh. With unrestrained imagination he armed his agents with super-devices such as the Vortex Beam (which lifts objects through the air), the Aphonic Bomb (which explodes without sound), a pocket-sized Electronic Absorber (which saves Fury from a huge jolt of electricity) and a molecular disintegrator called the Q-Ray machine—all in his first, eleven-page story! Steranko also added such behind-the-scenes material as a look inside Spy School and a colorful supporting cast including the mysterious Countess Valentina Allegro de Fontaine, who was to begin a slyly-handled but unabashedly sexual affair with Fury. SHIELD's enemies were a legion of ingenious, scheming, super-scientific fiends, particularly the Yellow Claw, a stock Oriental villain from the 1950s, now revived as a maniac out to conquer the world with gadgetry. The stories were high-speed blasts of technological combat, often jumbled and hard to follow, but written with a subtle campiness that let us know the writer was coming from outside the field, doing this as a lark.

Steranko's greatest impact came not from his writing but his art. Drawing upon the pop art and psychedelic fashions of his time, he made nearly every page a crazily twisting, tilting design of action-crowded panels, vivid colors and flashy visual effects (Steranko claims credit, in fact, for getting Marvel to drop the heavy use of gray which weakened their art so much in earlier years). Bodies hurtled and twisted with an abandon that would have given Kirby pause, while spiny, swirling conglomerations of machinery crowded every scene; but most pages nevertheless resolved into cohesive patterns. This attention to the layout of an entire page, rather than merely the separate panels within it, suggested a new dimension of story-telling to the many young artists whose imaginations were seized by his work. And his willingness to innovate visually with nearly every drawing helped loosen up the field for new approaches to comic art. Thus, although he had few significant imitators, Steranko set standards that were to open ground for an explosion of visual innovation during the early 1970s.

He also set standards in his attitude toward his work. With his diverse talents he had the liberty to approach comics on his own terms, and he did so with a vengeance. "If you're a publisher and you want my work," he has said, "you get it my way or you don't get it at all." Of Marvel he says, "We had disagreements about the way I told stories....And if I had to sit there and put a lot of Steranko blood, sweat and tears into it...I felt that at least I had the right to say, 'No, you're not going to do this to my work.' " This independence posed a problem for Lee: "It was simply that Jim, who is something of a perfectionist, would take forever to do a page, and you know what our schedule is. And I used to say, 'For Christ's sake, work faster! So don't put as much work in it!...' And he couldn't care less about deadlines. He did it his way."

Because of Steranko's trouble meeting deadlines, Lee—despite a great admiration for his work—felt obliged to bring other artists in in his stead, sending him off to make his living in other fields. He thus became

the first of a new breed of artist to rebel against the assembly-line methods of production, a breed who would shortly begin to force a number of changes in the business of publishing comic books.

A pair of other new writers drifted through Marvel in those years. Arnold Drake, long a mainstay of Jack Schiff and Murray Boltinoff at DC, used his odd imagination to good effect in the flexible Marvel universe. During a year-long fill-in for Roy Thomas on **X-Men** he crafted an exciting tale (drawn, albeit hastily, by Steranko) involving a mysterious new female mutant named Polaris, the introduction of Cyclops' hot-headed brother, Havok, and a deviously complex scheme by Magneto (**X-Men** 50-52, Nov. 1968-Jan. 1969). He also created a futuristic group called the Guardians of the Galaxy for a one-shot story in a new Showcase-style title named **Marvel Super-Heroes** (in issue 18). Featuring various humans evolved to adapt to different planetary conditions—including a massive Jovian named Charlie-27 and a crystalline Plutonian called Martinex—and stunningly drawn by Gene Colan, it was an impressive enough idea to be remembered for a series of its own seven years later.

Also pinch-hitting frequently was Archie Goodwin, who was making his first forays into the superhero genre. Once a prominent EC fan-addict, Goodwin, like many recent comic writers, set out to break into the field as an artist. His scripts, however, shone more brightly than his art, and by the mid-1960s he had become the most respected horror writer in the field with Jim Warren's **Creepy** and **Eerie** magazines. On another Warren title, **Blazing Combat**, he displayed a tremendous flair for gritty, heart-felt war stories which was to serve him well in the 1970s. His earliest superhero work for Lee was less impressive, although he did contribute a good set of stories in which Iron Man battled Marvel's regular crime syndicate, the Maggia (**Tales of Suspense** 99-**Iron Man** 1, Mar.-May, 1968). Goodwin's greatest moments lay still ahead of him.

Stan Lee himself, although holding to a steady course that gave his readers dependable entertainment, would no longer be the great source of innovation he had once been. On **Spider-Man** he continued Peter Parker's collegiate soap opera, but without the complexity or rapid change he and Ditko had given it. Many early villains returned for fun stories, but new menaces, such as huge, petulant crime czar the Kingpin, were less satisfying. Despite a certain repetitiveness to the stories (such sub-plots as Aunt May's periodic bouts with death became almost laughable) and the competent but unimpressive art of John Romita, Spider-Man retained enough personal charm to rise to be Marvel's most popular hero.

Lee approached **Daredevil** with a little more audacity, introducing Matt Murdock's swinging "twin brother" Mike—in fact only a role played by Matt with the aid of his supersenses in order to prevent his friends from deducing his secret identity—and then arranging a moving fake death for him. But, except for Gene Colan's breathtakingly dramatic art, beautifully inked by Syd Shores, Daredevil never quite outgrew the shadow of Spider-Man.

Colan's art also graced **Iron Man**, enabling Lee to bring a little more dynamism into his stories. Munitions, government and communism continued to predominate (as in "Here Lies Hidden...The Unspeakable Ultimo!", **Tales of Suspense** 76, Apr., 1966, when the Mandarin attacked the West), but a

Mainstay characters such as Spiderman and the Hulk supported their own titles

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new drama and intrigue entered the strip.

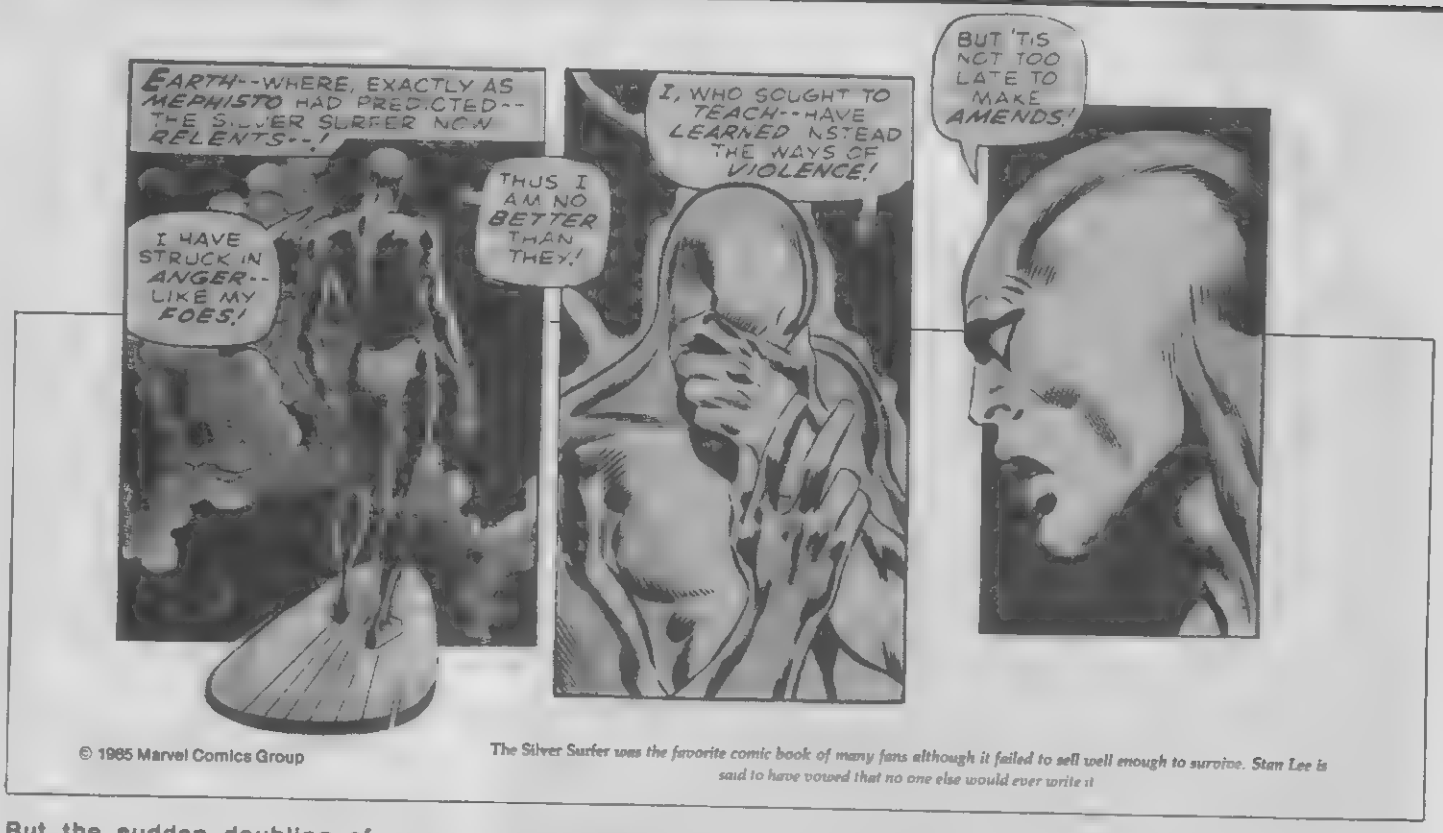
In **The Hulk**, Lee continued to play with his themes of alienation and persecution, as Bill Everett was replaced by the rougher, grimmer renditions of John Buscema and Gil Kane. The series' steadiest artist, however, was Marie Severin, once a respected colorist and staffer at EC, where her brother John had been a star penciler and inker; now, with inks by Herb Trimpe, she proved to have a sensitive, naturalistic style of her own.

Lee was also blessed with good artwork on **Dr. Strange**, where Everett paid tribute to Ditko's earlier work with a beautifully archaic, ornamental style evocative of the mysterious East. Everett left shortly—when given a chance to again draw the character he had created in 1939, the Sub-Mariner—but in his place came Marie Severin and Dan Adkins, a former assistant to Wally Wood, who used a neat, polished style much like his mentor's. The writing, unfortunately, was only sporadically imaginative, as Lee repeatedly called for hasty pinch-hit jobs from Denny O'Neil, Raymond Marais, Jim Lawrence and Roy Thomas.

The enlargements of Marvel's staff reflected an overall boom in the company's sales, and new titles inevitably followed. **Fantasy Masterpieces**, debuting in late 1965, featured reprints of stories from the 1940s and 1950s, relying upon the curiosity and devotion of true Marvelites to keep it afloat. **Not Brand Ecch**, a superhero humor comic full of Marvel in-jokes, followed in mid-1967. Shortly after, **Fantasy Masterpieces** changed its name to **Marvel Super-Heroes**, showcasing new ideas. The first of those was Captain Marvel (no relation to the Golden Age hero), a noble warrior-scientist of the alien Kree ostensibly dispatched to Earth to punish mankind for the Fantastic Four's earlier destruction of a Kree robot, but in fact stranded there by a scheming officer who covets the Captain's beloved. Drawn by Colan and leanly written by Lee, the idea was an instant hit, and soon, in Roy Thomas' hands, it graduated to its own title (May, 1968), one of a bonanza of new titles to come from Marvel in the same year. Like most of those titles, unfortunately, it was to suffer from changing creative teams and inconsistent work, and like a number of them, it was doomed to failure in two years—despite the fact that the final five issues featured some clever science fiction ideas from Thomas and masterful Gil Kane artwork.

Early 1968 looked like a perfect time to expand the line. To begin with, all the two-feature comic titles—**Tales to Astonish, Tales of Suspense** and **Strange Tales**—were split apart as all six series received their own magazines. The expansion was greeted enthusiastically by the readers, but it would, unfortunately, cause more harm than good. The Hulk did plod steadily along under Lee and Severin (soon followed by Herb Trimpe), and the Sub-Mariner enjoyed some fun adventures under Thomas and Buscema. But Iron Man lost Colan, leaving the art in less able hands, Johnny Craig and George Tuska, while Goodwin's scripts were unable to keep its quality up. Kirby, perhaps feeling too burdened by the new full-length stories, soon left Captain America; Jim Steranko contributed three stylized, disturbing stories (**Captain America** 110, 111, 113; Feb.-May, 1969) and Gene Colan illustrated a number of issues, but too many changes left the series directionless.

SHIELD started with promise, as Steranko used the new twenty page format to experiment with some complicated, offbeat single-issue stories.


EARTH--WHERE, EXACTLY AS MEPHISTO HAD PREDICTED--THE SILVER SURFER NOW RELENTS--!
I HAVE STRUCK IN ANGER--LIKE MY FOES!
THUS I AM NO BETTER THAN THEY!
I, WHO SOUGHT TO TEACH--HAVE LEARNED INSTEAD THE WAYS OF VIOLENCE!
BUT 'TIS NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE AMENDS!

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The Silver Surfer was the favorite comic book of many fans although it failed to sell well enough to survive. Stan Lee is said to have vowed that no one else would ever write it

But the sudden doubling of page-production worsened his trouble with deadlines until Lee pulled in a pinch-hitter, which angered Steranko and caused him to leave the strip. Writers such as Gary Friedrich and artists including Frank Springer, Herb Trimpe and a young Kirby-imitator named Barry Smith were unable to fill the gap. The title was cancelled after fifteen issues in November of 1969.

Dr. Strange was perhaps the best of the newly independent titles, with Thomas taking a literary, cosmic approach to the Doctor's magic, and art first by Dan Adkins and then by Colan, darkly and mysteriously inked by Tom Palmer. But sales flagged, and even an attempt to make Strange a sort of superhero, complete with leotards and mask, could not keep the title from a premature demise in the same month as the **SHIELD** title.

One of Marvel's boldest ventures of 1968 was **The Spectacular Spider-Man**, a magazine format, black-&-white, 35 cent version of the company's best-selling title. The first issue failed commercially largely because of distribution troubles, and a full color second issue followed suit. This would not to be Marvel's last attempt to move into the magazine format market that had done so well for Jim Warren's comics.

The finest of the new titles, in both story and art, was Stan Lee's favorite, **The Silver Surfer**. Selling for twenty-five cents (when regular comics were still twelve), every issue featured a forty-page story of the Surfer by Lee and Buscema followed by a ten-page science fiction parable called a "Tale of the Watcher" by Lee and Colan. Working on his beloved "Sentinel of the Spaceways," Lee was inspired to his most eloquent, even poetic, writing in scripts that required no hype or pretense to make their quality and profundity clear. In the hero's origin story, all the oddity of a bald, shiny surfer flying through the sky bemoaning the contradictions of the human spirit disappears. It becomes a genuinely moving tale of a man losing both love and home, surrendering his fate into the hands of an awesome stranger, and then renouncing his last possession, his freedom, for a higher principle. The Surfer's meditations upon the contrast between the contented, stagnant world of his origin and the savage striving of Earth produced some well-turned maxims about the purpose of life: "That which is mine for the taking is not worth the taking. Paradise unearned is but a land of shadows.' This seemed, indeed, to be the culmination of Stan Lee's career as a writer. To match this high mark in Lee's writing, Buscema turned in some of his most sweeping landscapes, evocative expressions and beautiful figures, superbly complemented by the inking of Joe Sinnott and of Buscema's brother, Sal.

But even the finest work was not immune to the bad sales of 1969 and 1970. With issue eighteen in September of 1970, **The Silver Surfer** joined **The X-Men, Dr. Strange, SHIELD, Captain Marvel, Marvel Super-Heroes** and **Not Brand Ecch** in oblivion (the Surfer was Lee's greatest disappointment among the cancellations, and he claims to have forbidden anyone else at Marvel from reviving the series unless he himself is able to write it).

Like DC, Marvel's latest efforts at experimentation failed to forestall the crisis of sales, and like DC, they realized that something fundamental would soon have to change.

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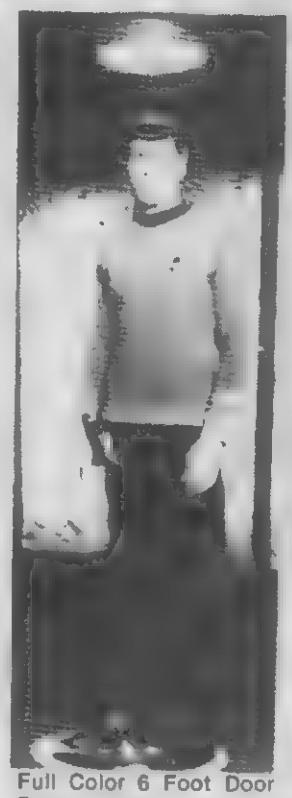

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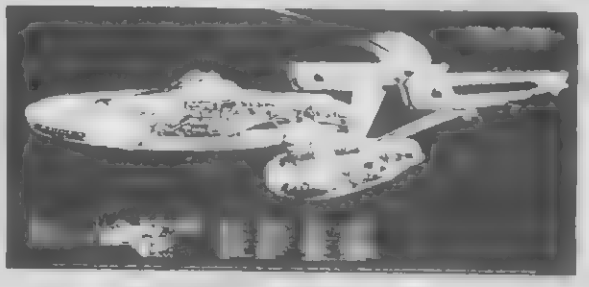

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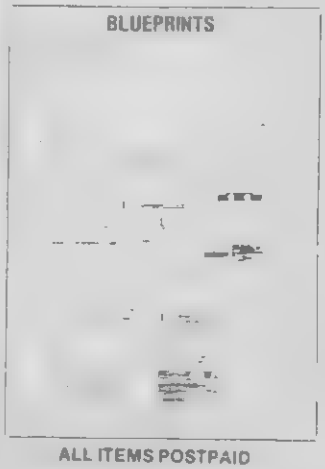

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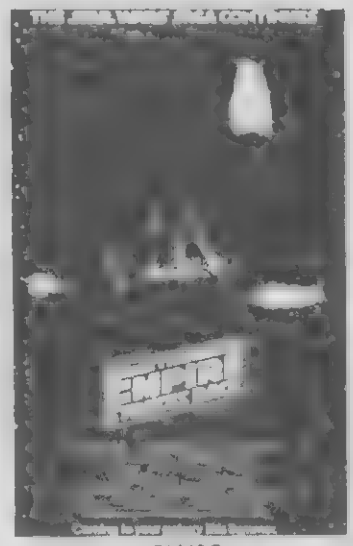
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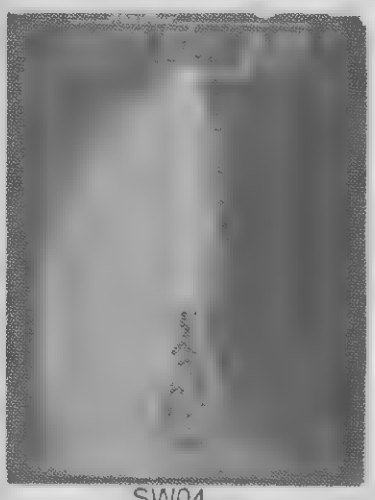
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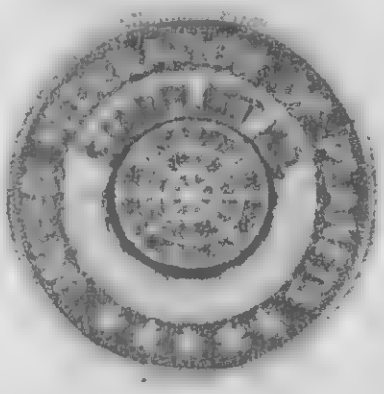

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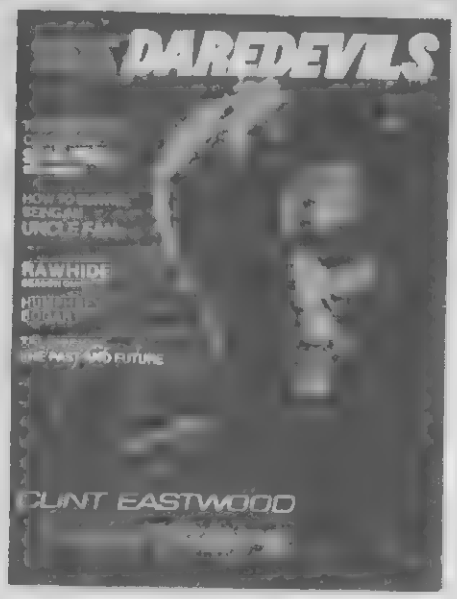

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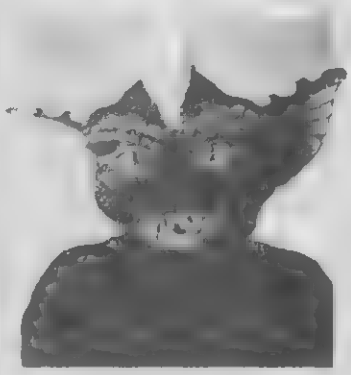

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Best of DC Digest 66

Justice League of America 244—Conway; Staton; Machlan

Crisis on Infinite Earths 8—Wolfman; Perez; Ordway; Perez

Fury of Firestorm 41—Conway; Kayanan; Akin/Garvey; Kayanan/Giordano; "Storm Warning"

Tales of the Teen Titans 59—Wolfman; Perez; Giordano; Perez

Blue Devil Annual 1—Cohn & Mishkin; Cullins; Martin; Cullins

Vigilante 23—Kupperberg; T. Smith; Magyar

Deadman 7—Neal Adams

The Outsiders 1—Barr; Aparo; Aparo; Aparo

Hex 3—Fleisher; Texeira

Batman 389—Moench; Mandrake; Mandrake; Mandrake

Superman 413—Maggin; Swan; Hunt

Star Trek 20—Woods; Sutton; Villagran; Sutton/Villagran

Amethyst 11—Cohn & Mishkin; TBA; Tanghal; Cullins/Tanghal

Arak 50—R. & D. Thomas; DeZuniga; DeZuniga; DeZuniga

G.I. Combat 280—Kanigher; Glanzman; Glanzman; Kubert

JLA Annual 3—Mishkin; Hoberg; Machlan

Super Powers Mini-Series 3—Kupperberg; Kirby; Theakston; Kirby/Theakston

Omega Men 32—Klein; Spiegel; Spiegel

The Legion of Super-Heroes 16—Levits; Lightle; Mahlstedt; Lightle/Mahlstedt

Arion Special 1—Kupperberg; Duursema; Duursema; Duursema

Swamp Thing 42—Moore; Bissette; Totleben; Bissette/Totleben

Batman and the Outsiders 27—Barr; Davis; Davis; Davis

Green Lantern 194—Englehart; Staton; Patterson; Staton/Patterson

Sgt. Rock 406—Kanigher; Gonzales; Gonzales; Kubert

Warlord 99—Burkett; A. Kubert; Marcos

Blue Devil 18—Cohn & Mishkin; Kupperberg; Magyar; Cullins/Martin

Who's Who 9—Wein; various; various; Perez

Firestorm Annual 3—Conway, Kayanan; Akin; Kayanan/Giordano

Infinity Inc. 20—Thomas; McFarlane; DeZuniga; McFarlane/DeZuniga

The New Teen Titans 14—Wolfman; Barreto; Tanghal

Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes 329—Levitz; Giffen/Lightle; Mahlstedt; Giffen/Mahlstedt

Detective 556—Moench; Colan; B. Smith

World's Finest 321—Cavalieri; Delbo; Alcala; Delbo/Mitchell

All-Star Squadron 51—Thomas, Clark; Colleta; Clark/DeZuniga

V 10—Bates; Infantino; DeZuniga; Bingham

Omega Men Annual 2—Klein; Colon; Giffen; McManus; O'Neill; T. Smith

Nathaniel Dusk II 2—McGregor; Colan; Colan

DC Challenge 1—Evanier; Colan; B. Smith; Ordway

Action 537—Boldman; Schaffenberger

Wonder Woman 328—Newell; Heck; Heck; Barreto

MARVEL COMICS

The Thing 29—Carlin; Wilson; Ryan

Daredevil 224—Owsley; Jurgens; Isherwood

The New Mutants 33—Claremont, Leialoha

Web of Spider-Man 8—Fingeroth; McLeod

West Coast Avengers 2—Englehart; Milgrom; Sinnott

Planet Terry 8—Manak; Kremer; D'Agostino

Peter Porker 4

Cloak and Dagger 3

Red Sonja 11—L. Simonson, Wilshire; Nichols

Dreadstar and Company 5—Starlin

Rawhide Kid 4—Mantlo; Trimpe; Talaoc

Squadron Supreme 3—Gruenwald; Hall; Beatty

Conan the King 31—Kraar; Docherty; Isherwood

Moonshadow 4—DeMatteis; Muth

Swords of the Swashbucklers 3—Mantlo; Guice

Life of Captain Marvel 4—Starlin; Wein; Sinnott; Milgrom

Amazing Spider-Man 270—DeFalco; Frenz; Rubenstein

Captain America 311—Gruenwald; Neary; Janke

Power Pack 16—L. Simonson; Brigman; Wiacek

Micronauts 14—Gillis; Jones; Bulanadi

Alpha Flight 28—Byrne

Wally the Wizard 8—Bolling

The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones 32—Grant; Ditko; Patterson

Dazzler 40—Goodwin; Chadwick; Guice

Ewoks 4—Manak; Kremer; D'Agostino

Groo the Wanderer 9—Aragones with Evanier

Longshot 3—Nocenti; Adams

The Vision and the Scarlet Witch 2—Englehart; Howell; Mushynsky

The Fantastic Four Index 2—compiled by Olshevsky

The Avengers Annual 14—Stern; Byrne

The Fantastic Four Annual 19—Byrne; Sinnott

The Savage Sword of Conan 117—Yakata; Kwapisz

Black Dragon 5—Claremont; Bolton

Time Spirits 6—Perry; Yeates

The One 2—Veitch

Marvel Age Magazine 32

The Incredible Hulk 313—Mantlo; Mignola; Talaoc

The Avengers 261—Stern; J. Buscema; Palmer

Conan 176—Owsley; J. Buscema; Camp

Marvel Tales 181—Lee; Romita; Esposito

Rom 72—Mantlo; Ditko

X-Men 199—Claremont; Romita Jr.; Green

Moon Knight 6—Zelenetz; Warner; Cruz

Power Man and Iron Fist 120—Owsley; Bright; Acerno

Royal Roy 4—DeCesare; Kremer; D'Agostino

Muppet Babies 4—Ky; Severin; Roettcher

Get Along Gang 4—Manak; Costanza; Roettcher

The Sword of Solomon Kane 2—Macchio; Blevins

G.I. Joe 41—Hama;Whigham; Mushynsky

Eternals 2—Gillis; S. Buscema; Gordon

Marvel Fanfare 23—McKenzie; Steacy

Fantastic Four 284—Byrne; Gordon

Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man 108—David; Von Eeden

The New Defenders 149—Gillis; Perlin; Nichols

Star Wars 101—Duffy; Martin

Thor 361—W. Simonson

Transformers 10—Budiansky; Johnson; Baker

Elfquest 4—R. & W. Pini

Secret Wars II 5—Shooter; Milgrom; Leialoha

Iron Man 200—O'Neil, Bright; Akin; Garvey

Spider-Man Index 8

Doctor Who 14

Coyote 14

Savage Tales 1

Epic Illustrated 32

Marvel Graphic Novel 18: The She Hulk

SHIPPING IN AUGUST

DC COMICS

Mask 1 (4 issue series)—Fleischer; Chen; Delbeato.

Crisis on Infinte Earths 9—Wolfman; Perez; Ordway; Perez

Tales of the Teen Titans 60—Wolfman; Perez; Perez; Perez

Me and Joe Priest (graphic novel)—Potter; Randall; Randall; Randall

DC Comics Presents 88—Englehart; Giffen

Best of DC Digest 67—various (Legion of Super-Heroes)

Justice League of America 245—Conway; McDonnell; Machlan

Fury of Firestorm 42—Conway; Kayanan; Akin & Garvey; Kayanan/Giordano

Hex 4—Fleisher; Texeira; Texeira; Texeira

Infinity Inc. Annual 1—R. Thomas; Harris & McFarlane; DeZuniga

Vigilante 24—Kupperberg; T. Smith; Magyar

The Outsiders 2—Barr; Aparo; Aparo; Aparo

Batman 390—Moench; Mandrake; Mandrake; Mandrake

Superman 414—Bates; Swan; Williamson

Star Trek 21—Rozakis; Sutton; Villagran; Sutton/Wray

Amethyst 12—Cohn; Colon; Kesel; Colon/Kesel

Super Powers Mini Series 4—Kupperberg; Kirby; Theakston

Omega Men 33—Klein; McManus; McManus; McManus

The Legion of Super-Heroes 17—Levitz; Lightle; Mahlstedt. Lightle/Mahlstedt

Shadow of the Batman 1 (5-issue reprint series)—Englehart; Simonson; Milgrom; M. Rogers

Swamp Thing 43—Moore; Woch; Totleban; Bissette/Totleben

Batman and the Outsiders 28—Barr; Davis; Davis; Davis

Green Lantern 195—Englehart; Staton; Patterson

Sgt. Rock 407—Kanigher; Catan; Catan; Kubert

Warlord 100—Fleisher; Kubert; Kubert; Greil

Blue Devil 19—Mishkin & Cohn; Kupperberg; Magyar; Cullins/Martin

Who's Who 10—Wein; various; Cullens/Giordano

Infinity Inc. 21—R. Thomas; McFarlane & Hernandez; DeZuniga

The New Teen Titans 15—Wolfman; Barreto; Tanghal

Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes 330—Levitz; Giffen & Lightle; Mahlstedt; Giffen/Mahlstedt

Action 574—Boldman; Schaffenberger; Oksner

Detective 557—Moench; Colan; B. Smith; Colan/Giordano

World's Finest 322—Zimmerman; Giffen; Kesel; Giffen/Kesel

All-Star Squadron 52—R. Thomas; Jones & Dellinges; Colletta; Jones/DeZuniga

V 11—Bates; Infantino; DeZuniga; Bingham

Nathaniel Dusk II 3 (4-issue series)—McGregor; Colan

DC Challenge 2—Wein; Patton; DeCarlo; Patton/DeCarlo

Hell on Earth (Graphic Novel)—Giffen & Fleming; Giffen; Theakston

Continued on page **50**

GIL THORP TO MARRY EMILY CLOVER

After 27 years of coaching three sports, helping young and troubled students solve their problems and entertaining millions of newspaper readers across the country, comic strip coach Gil Thorp of Milford High has finally tied the knot.

Thorp, who has been 35 years old for the past 27 years, married Emily "Mimi" Clover, 28, on July 10, 1985. Miss Clover is employed at Milford

High as a physical education teacher and cheerleading coach. She is also the first woman Thorp has been serious about since Milford High's poetry teacher, Holly Dobbs, ran out on him in 1970.

The happy couple became engaged on April 11, 1985, after a series of mishaps which led Thorp to believe Miss Clover was seeing another man. Fortunately, the confusion was cleared up and Thorp was finally able to profess his love to Miss Clover after the state basketball finals were over.

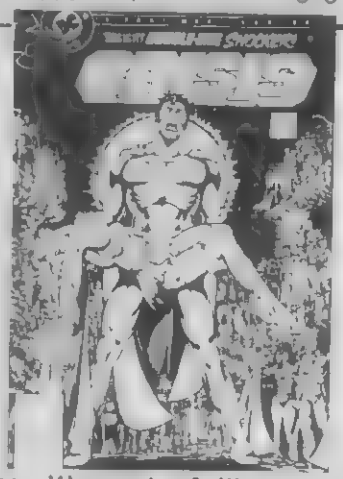
A phone call to Jack Berrill, creator of the strip, confirmed that Thorp and Miss Clover had definitely gone through with their plans to marry. Their honeymoon plans have not yet been announced.

CRISIS RECEIVES INTL. FAME

"We told everyone that the changes in the **Crisis on Infinite Earths** maxi-series were real and that major characters would die—and no one believed us," stated writer/editor Marv Wolfman. "Well, Supergirl **will die** in the special double-sized issue number seven—and this is a real death. She won't miraculously return to life in issue twelve."

Media attention to the death of Supergirl has spanned newspapers, television and radio stations around the US, Canada and England. An Associated Press wire story has been reprinted in newspapers across the continent, and the national Gannett chain paper **USA Today** ran another story. Segments have appeared on the Cable News Network and **News at 5** on CBS-TV in New York; as well as on CBC-Radio in Canada, WBCS-Radio in Milwaukee and KING-Radio in Seattle. Additional pieces are scheduled, including an interview with Marv Wolfman conducted by the BBC in England.

"We're serious about the changes in the **Crisis** series," agreed Vice President/Executive Editor Dick Giordano. "After 50 years of comic book publishing, DC Comics has created a confusing universe of characters. There's a Superman who exists on Earth who ages—he's graying at the temples. Then there's a Superman on Earth I who is always 29. For our 50th anniversary year, we wanted to do whatever is necessary to make the DC characters and books accessible to all readers. That means **really** changing

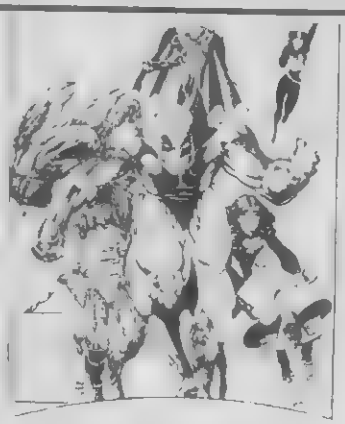


things. It's sort of like a spring cleaning—we're not just dusting the surfaces, we're cleaning out the whole attic."

"I want to stress that these changes are not cosmetic," points out Marv Wolfman. "What's happening in the **Crisis** series is affecting all the books in the DC Comics line."

As for the rest of the maxi-series, Marv Wolfman isn't talking. "DC Comics publisher Jenette Kahn felt that our initial 'hit' list of DC characters was not comprehensive enough. She was willing to include more major characters than any of us expected. Supergirl's death in issue seven is not the last of the major upheavals in the **Crisis** series."

If all of the this seems vaguely familiar to you, almost an echo of the so-called "Big Bang" that Jim Shooter had planned for the Marvel Universe according to Doug Moench, you're not alone. It seems ironic that Moench left Marvel in protest of this "Plan" that never came to pass at Marvel—and wound up at DC Comics.



MUTANT NEWS

THE X FACTOR

X-Factor is a new title from Marvel featuring the original X-Men, Cyclops, the Beast, the Iceman and Angel, teamed with an as-yet-unannounced fifth member. Writer and inker will be Bob Layton while Jackson Guice will contribute pencils and Mike Carlin will edit. **Defenders 152, X-Men 201, Avengers 263** and **Fantastic Four 286** will combine to act as a four-issue overture to the new series.

NEW ART FOR NEW MUTANTS

With issue 32, Bill Sienkiewicz will be taking a leave of absence from **New Mutants** (as previously reported in these pages) and Steve Leialoha will fill in for three issues, while Mary Wilshire handles the next three.

Sienkiewicz will be creating a Kingpin graphic novel along with Frank Miller and is rumored to be working on other projects as well.

A FESTIVAL OF

Cartoon Art

CARTOONISTS ON CAMPUS PART II

Milton Caniff and Mort Walker join editors and syndicators for a roundtable discussion of newspaper strips.

BY ED BLACK

Beetle Bailey © 1985 King Features Syndicate

Schulte: We'll turn to the younger generation. He looks younger anyway. Mike and I left the Chicago Daily News the same year. Mike Peters.

Mike Peters: I want to reinforce a little bit of what Mort said. See, all syndicates are skuzzballs (much audience laughter). When a cartoonist goes to a syndicate and he's got that proverbial group of cartoons under his arm, he is all alone. And the syndicate knows this. The syndicates know what cartoonists are really looking for is a mother. We want to be taken care of; we want to be nurtured. We want a father figure, and the syndicate knows this. So they'll say, 'Come in here; let's take care of it. Now, sit down. You've got a good strip.'

The cartoonist thinks, 'Ohhhhh, man!! It's gonna be great!!' And they say, 'Sid likes it, Arnie likes it, even the big man likes it!'

The cartoonist thinks, 'Boy, do I have great stuff!' They say, 'We want to start syndicating it, so all you have to do is sign this little thing. Don't worry about it.' You say, 'Well, shouldn't I kind of read this over a little bit?' They say, 'Don't worry! It's a standard contract.' And for want of something, you sign it, under a little bit of duress.

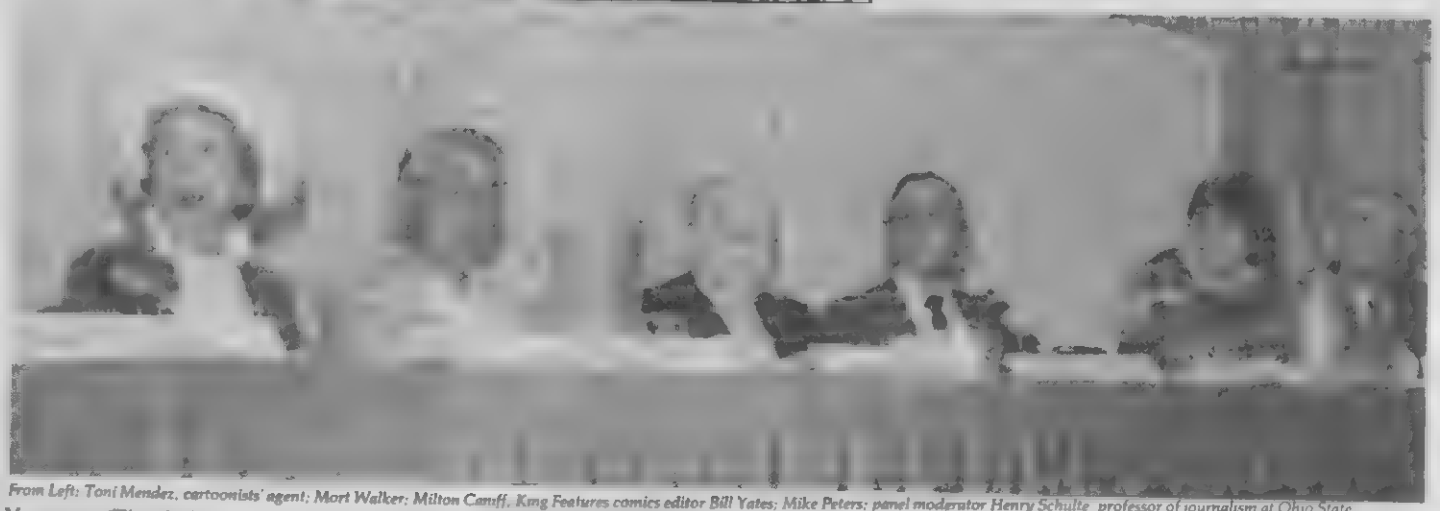
A lot of contracts go from three to five years, or five years to ten years; five years and renewable. Wonderful thing they have in standard contracts is: you sign this and it's just for five years, renewable after five years if it's agreeable. You say, 'Great! Five year contract; that's not bad. If after five years I don't want to do it, I can get out.'

All five-year-renewable means is that if the syndicate wants to continue it for anther five years they just continue it.

YOU GROANED, CANYON. ARE YOU HIT?
NO — I WAS THINKING... I FALL INTO A SLIT TRENCH WITH THE ONLY DELECTABLE FEMALE WITHIN MILES — AND SHE'S WEARING ARMOR!
4-25

Steve Canyon © 1985 Milton Caniff

"You've got to have a lawyer. If you don't, you're going to get trapped."
—Mike Peters
Creator, MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM



From Left: Toni Mendez, cartoonists' agent; Mort Walker; Milton Caniff; King Features comics editor Bill Yates; Mike Peters; panel moderator Henry Schulte professor of journalism at Ohio State

You say, 'That's kind of weird. I thought I had some control over it.' Well, you don't have control unless you get a lawyer. The biggest thing you should do if you're interested in going to a syndicate is not walk in there without a lawyer, because a lawyer will be able to look over something and tell you in their own words if this is what you want or not.

The other thing about that contract, though, is when you bring it up to the syndicate after five years, you say, 'Well, my contract is up and I'd like to have a lawyer talk to you.' They're crushed! They say, 'You WHAT!?!' And you say, 'But I'd like to have a lawyer.' They say, 'But we're your friends! If you have a lawyer, we might have to get a lawyer.' They already have a lawyer! Who do you think wrote up the goddamn contract? Six lawyers run around (the syndicate) all the time. You've got to have a lawyer. If you don't, you're going to get trapped in a five or ten year contract that's gonna kill you.

Another side thing which has nothing to do with what's bad or good about syndication, it's when you are syndicated, editorial cartoonists get dropped (by papers) all the time. I don't know about strip cartoonists or other editorial cartoonists, but I get dropped all the time and then picked up by another paper. It about evens out.

THE SYNDICATE STRIKES BACK

Schulte: This poor guy from King Features, Bill Yates, is put upon and I was about to put upon him even more.

Bill Yates: Actually, you guys shouldn't talk about the syndicate that way. When I signed with King (as cartoonist of) **Professor Phumble**, my predecessor at the firm , Sylvan Byck, brought out a contract. It wasn't very complicated. I could read the guarantee price against the commission, so I wanted a little more money there, and he said, 'Well, wait a little longer. Wait until the strip gets going.' That was fair enough. I wanted an estate clause in case of my death and Sylvan said he wanted to check with the president of the syndicate. He came back in a few minutes; my estate clause was in there and if I died, my heirs got my strip. I think that's a pretty fair deal. I remember when Milt signed up, the deal he made (for **Steve Canyon** in 1946). Would you tell that, Milt?

Milton Caniff: During **Terry and the Pirates** I did not own the feature. The only way to get out of that well-paid slavery was to get an agent and a feature. One day he came out of the blue: Marshall Field. He was starting a new paper in Chicago. He tried to buy features from Hearst and all the other syndicates. Nobody'd sell him anything because their big customers were the Chicago Tribune and the Hearst papers still in existence there. So he went on a raid to see if he could get people from other syndicates. This was just what I was waiting for. I was ready with all of the words and arguments—this was three Marshall Fields ago. I went in to talk with him. We walked a few blocks up Park Avenue (in New York) to Field's apartment. We walked into this swank place, then his business guy arrived and we went downstairs. The moment of truth was approaching. Field turned to me and said, 'I understand you are interested in doing a strip for the Chicago Sun. What do you want?'

I'd been waiting fifty years for this moment. I hesitated for at least a half-second before I gave him my answer. I

"We never change anything, any drawings or the guts of copy without discussing it with the cartoonist."

—Bill Yates
King Features Syndicate

said I wanted sole ownership and full editorial control. Then I waited with my guard up. He leaned back in his chair and said, 'Very good. We'll have a drink.' And that's all there was to it!

Bill Yates: I think the syndicate can talk to 'em because most of the talent—the guys who work for us—are my friends preceding the days I went to King as Comics Editor. We don't have censorship. I did say a few times to Mort, 'Are you sure you want to do that?' We never change anything, any drawing, especially, or the guts of copy without discussing it with the cartoonist. It would be stupid. They're the great creative geniuses. When we get around to their copy, we talk to them on the phone about it.

We have no censorship whatsoever, and I think there's a great esprit de corps between the syndicate and the cartoonists. I wouldn't blame anybody for getting a lawyer to sign any sort of contract, like closing on a house. When someone signs with us, I assume he would check with a lawyer. You can negotiate. Maybe they'd want to ask for a bigger guarantee or just say 'I'll not do this or that'.

Questions from the Audience: (To Bill Yates)I understand you get a lot of ideas coming across your desk. What is it you look for, for something which has the potential to be syndicated?

Yates: I look at over two or three thousand submissions a year. The syndicate goes with one or two. The percentage is lousy for getting syndicated. Of course, a lot of those are obviously something I could dispense with quite quickly. Some are little drawings on toilet paper, but at the same time a lot of very good talent is represented, but they don't have the right concept. Then I try to encourage any of that talent, even though we didn't choose to take that feature on, to please try again in the future. First of all, if it's a humorous strip, it ought to be funny. I'm an ordinary person and I've looked at syndicated comics all my life. My first look (at a submission) is not as an editor but as a reader. I read it as I would (if it were) in a newspaper. If it makes me laugh, we're over step one. I might laugh at something that was a clever remark on a two-line joke, but I don't think that's the type of thing that makes a comic stick around for 10, 20 or 30 years.

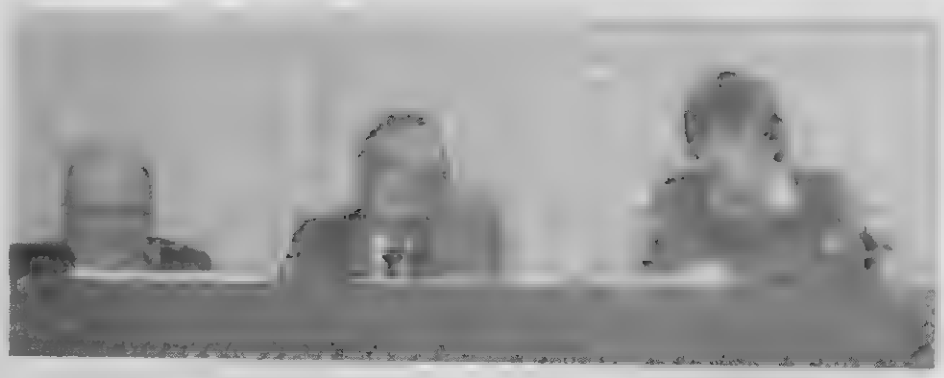
People don't remember jokes per se; they remember characters. They become emotionally involved with characters. The humor would spring from very good characterization and relationships between characters which make humorous sparks. There should be other factors: the reader identity with what's going on in the strip, the vicarious element, things the reader would like to do deep down in his heart but is too civilized to do. These are things which make a strip stay around for a long time and that's what a syndicate wants. It doesn't want a hula hoop joke strip.

There are exceptions to everything. There are some strips that aren't that strong in characterization, namely two or three exceptions, but basically that's what I look for. I'm not the one who says we'll take on a strip. Are you kiddin'? I take stuff home to my wife and young daughter to get opinions from them. But I have to realize where they're coming from, and put certain value points on that. There are people whose opinions I respect very much and I put more value points on what they say than what someone who doesn't know anything about comic strips or doesn't even read a newspaper says.

It is very complicated, really...You avoid trying to get through committees, passing it around, and that sort of thing. I keep remembering Mark Twain said a camel is a horse put together by a committee. If you ask enough people what they think of a strip, you'll never get it through, even with your favorite strip. You could never get anybody to agree unanimously. It's really a big crap shoot. Knowledgeable people making the best judgements they can and putting a lot of money into seeing if it will work, but we never know until the public makes its judgement. It's fine with us because nobody knows what the hell they want. This is true in making movies, publishing books, making records and tv programming. Just think of the millions and millions of dollars spent on movies which flop. Syndicates have similar flops. In fact, there are only a handful of really super, super, super comic strips with the really big numbers.

Schulte: We might expand that question to Luke as (a newspaper) editor.

Luke Feck: If the syndicate is the momma and the poppa, the salesman is the little boy. He knows he'll get his



"(The Syndicates) change the name no matter what it's called. Beetle was originally called Spider. Peanuts was originally called Li'l Folks; Little Orphan Annie was called Little Orphan Otto; it was a little boy, but they thought little boys aren't as vulnerable as girls are, so they changed it . . ."

—Mort Walker

butt kicked if he doesn't make a sale, so they sit there and quiver across from you, plead with you to buy. But from our position, we have only so many spots on (the comic) page...If something goes on the page, something's going to have to go off the page. And the question becomes one of a balancing act.

Mike Peters: I'm not an editor, but I sat in on a meeting one time recently. I don't want to say what the feature was, but there was an editor and another person. They were both trying to discuss whether they wanted to buy it as a feature. And they said, 'We don't like this ourselves, but we know the people out there; it's the kind of strip they'll put on the refrigerator. It's a cute, very lovely little strip.' It was an awful strip! It was terrible! But what is the problem, though? An editor should do exactly as you do. When you like it you should buy it. But you don't either say, 'I don't like it but the folks will,' or 'I like it, but the folks won't like it.' You can't do that. You've got to pick the cartoon that makes you laugh.

Question: How much does a syndicate participate in the creative process or is it merely a marketing exercise?

Bill Yates: The basic idea or concept, the real quality that gets us interested comes from the cartoonist. That's the only way you're going to have a successful feature: through very bright talent. The market concept is something to last for a long time. We don't force the talent to do anything, but we offer our advice, such as it is—we hope it's good—for a long time after a strip starts.

I know that when we started **The Evermores**, which is perking along very well now, a change has been made...it's a very good new strip; it just started two years ago. The concept is very unique, one that hadn't been done before. It was Mort's concept. A couple from (the present) day are in different eras in history in other parts of the world. It gave a great opportunity for a variety of gags. We got a lot of response from readers when it appeared in the Roman era and Mort and Johnny Sajem—who draws the strip—felt they should stay in that era. Mort discussed it with me and we looked at gags, rated them and talked about them and right now I think the strip is like a brand new strip. It's a parallel between the society of the Romans and the modern-day era; the government, the military, the sports craze, the decadence, the whole thing. I'm very excited about the strip.

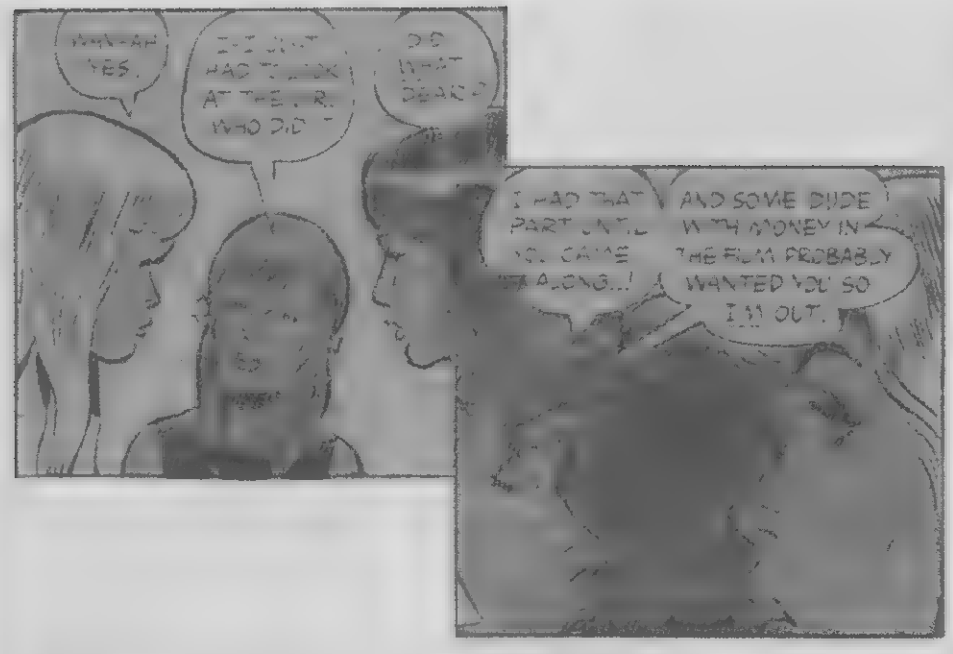
Almost every strip we start runs into snags along the way. Editors give us an amount of feedback and if the strip isn't moving fast enough we try to figure out what may be holding it back. We at King want to help and we try.

Mort Walker: The syndicate actually likes to get into the creative process a little bit, and tries its best. The main thing, it seems, as soon as it (buys, they) change the name, no matter what strip you bring in, no matter what it's called. Beetle was originally called **Spider** and they said they didn't like it. So I changed it. **Peanuts** was originally called **Li'l Folks; Little Orphan Annie** was called **Little Orphan Otto**; it was a little boy, but they thought boys aren't as vulnerable as girls are, so they changed it to a little girl. **Dick Tracy** was called **Plainclothes Tracy**.

Milton Caniff: Just some second thoughts on this. When I did **Dickie Dare** for the Associated Press, the original concept was this kid would read **1,001 Nights** or whatever, and, like Walter Mitty, (dream of his involvement with the story). And it got off to a grand start and somewhere began to drop off...Then Wilson Hicks, who was then editor of AP Services, said, 'You know what's wrong with this thing? There's nobody in it. It's just a straight, old three-month story and they know how it ends up.' So, we dropped the books and started on this China thing.

Bill Yates: I guess most cartoonists, through a syndicate, don't have ownership (of their strips). Some do. I think when you have ownership, you're in some position of leverage. When you're brand new, the syndicate is taking a (risky) shot on an unknown person. And there's an investment there for several years. They're afraid they'll take the short end of the stick; they're putting a lot of money into it, and you'll get angry some morning and march off to another syndicate and they'll be left holding the bag.

Toni Mendez: I believe an equitable contract has two sides to it. I can understand what Bill said about the concern of a syndicate, but if a contract is negotiated properly, a syndicate is protected as long as the client—the creative person—is getting their fair share. The big problem is that the artist can be dropped for one reason or another, or if that artist dies and there



are subsidiary rights that go on and with the change of the copyright law today, it is seeking more protection than it was years ago, so the copyright lasts for the length of the life of the creator, plus 50 years for the estate. It is possible to reason with any syndicate in the business if you handle a valuable property. If you have a weak property and you're going in with your hat in your hand, that's one thing, but if you're going in with a strong feature, you can negotiate. I have never known it to miss and protect them in what they're looking for. The most important thing is to hold the rights.

Milton Caniff: Let me just answer one question that didn't get answered: the ownership business. Bud Fisher owned **Mutt and Jeff** and his widow still owns the rights (note: Fisher died in 1954; the strip was carried on by Al Smith, then George Breisacher, and was discontinued in 1984). Al Capp owned **Li'l Abner**; **Henry** is owned by the estate of (its creator) Carl Anderson. But generally speaking, they didn't come in over the transom. These were negotiated after the fact. For instance, Al Capp sued United Features for $14 million against which he put up a strip called 'Abbey 'n' Slats' which was to be his next **Li'l Abner**, so to speak. Of course, they settled out of court, but this is the weapon he used. He was bold enough a person to do this—which helps.

Question: How do you tell the good guys from the bad guys in syndicates, and if you are with a syndicate that is not doing all that they possibly could?

Mike Peters: When you're in a contract that's going five years or ten years, you can take it to court if there is some infraction. The syndicate can do the same thing. If there is some infraction, if...you can find the syndicate not upholding their deal in any way, that is cause, at least, to take it to court and see if you could break the contract.

Don Wright (of the **Miami Herald**) was with the Washington Star Syndicate and he was in a very small number of papers. He wanted to get out of that contract even though he was in it for ten years, so he took them to court and finally got out of the contract, I think on the basis they were not selling him the way they should have been. He was in a contract with the New York Times Syndicate and they weren't selling him very well, so he got them to break that contract and jumped over to the Chicago Tribune Syndicate. There are ways of breaking a contract. As far as looking around for who the best syndicates are, often you'll find the best syndicates are the ones who are interested in you. They're the ones who answer your letters and show some kind of interest. It's one thing if you love to be syndicated by King Features, but if they don't care about you then you have to go to somebody else.

Mort Walker: First of all, before you all leave here, I want to take back everything I said against King Features. It was all a big joke because King Features has made me rich enough so I can finally afford a lawyer.

One of the reasons I wanted to go with King Features is that it has a great staff of salesmen. A lot of syndicates don't have any salesmen! There's just the head of the syndicate who's the salesman, the bookkeeper and the floorwasher. King Features does have a lot of people working there; they have their big merchandising or franchising department; they're very strong. You see **Popeye** bags all over the place; they have an entertainment division where they put together films and television shows based on the characters; they have the best worldwide sales force; so the opportunity to make more money is there with a syndicate that has those facilities. That's what I would look for in choosing a syndicate and there are a number of good ones; I would have to think King Features is best.

Mendez: I'd like to give another example of how a comic strip was saved. We represented the subsidiary rights to **Peanuts** when it was in all of 17 papers. Someone at the syndicate really believed in **Peanuts**. We used to sit and talk about the strip and how good it was. He said if it's that good, how come I can't sell it? His name is Harry Gilbert and I said, 'Harry, **Peanuts** is like olives; once you taste it everybody's going to love it."

One man who happened to be head of sales began knocking on doors, not major newspapers or in minor cities, but he went to the colleges and it was the college newspapers that picked up **Peanuts**. That's how it rose to where it is today.

Question to Luke Feck: I'm a little surprised that with sophisticated marketing and research that the only way you've been able to judge the popularity of a strip is in your one column. I would assume you track these continuously like television or advertising people do in their surveys?

Feck: We do more than that. Every other year, our market researchers make 400 telephone calls. Their results track very close to this unscientific one where people wrote in. I tend to prefer the ones where people write in because you know you get comic strip readers there. When you call people who just read the newspapers, they really may not be (readers) of (the comic) page.

Editorial cartoonist Kate Sally Palmer asks a question from the back of the auditorium: I have a question for Mort Walker. Years ago you said there were no women cartoonists because women have no sense of humor.

Walker: This is what happens when you make statements. I am the

"I did say I wonder if (women) have a different sense of humor than men. It went out on the AP wires and the papers put that tag on top: 'Cartoonist Says Women Have No Sense of Humor.' I got phone calls at 3 o'clock in the morning."

—Mort Walker

president of the Museum of Cartoon Art and about ten years ago—I didn't actually say that—we wanted to put together an exhibit of women's cartoons and we found there were very few women practicing cartooning at that time. I just wondered why because I felt there were a lot of women who could do it in between changing diapers.

Palmer: You said their lives were boring.

Walker: I don't remember that statement. I did say I wonder if they have a different sense of humor than men do and only because of observing there weren't more women cartoonists. Now there are. I take back everything I said. It went out on the AP wires and the papers put that tag on top: 'Cartoonist Says Women Have No Sense of Humor.' I got phone calls from California at 3 o'clock in the morning; They'd say, 'If you don't think women have a sense of humor, listen to this one.' And they'd tell me a joke.

NOTE: The Museum of Cartoon Art, in 1984, held an exhibit highlighting the works of female cartoonists, and the Reuben Awards Dinner of the National Cartoonists Society in April, 1984, was devoted to women cartoonists.

Question from Audience: I was wondering how much work an artist usually has to submit for syndication consideration. And for editorial cartoons.

Yates: With comic strips you need enough material for us to review to show us how your characters are going to develop. Lord knows you can't do much in three weeks, but you need to do the best you can in that area with your main characters and some of the relationships with the others that show what the concept is and to show your consistency with good strips. I don't think you could do that with much less than two or three weeks' work and hopefully a sample Sunday page with a dash of color to make your presentation look better. With the editorial cartoon, the syndicate almost always takes on someone who is already working for a paper. That's true of the three editorial cartoonists King syndicates.

Caniff: Let me just add to that. You don't always have to submit originals you're maybe afraid to lose. A syndicate also likes to see what your work looks like reduced down to the way it would appear in a newspaper. Today's strips are reduced down to about seven inches wide. The editor is in the business of knowing what (a strip) would look like in his paper.

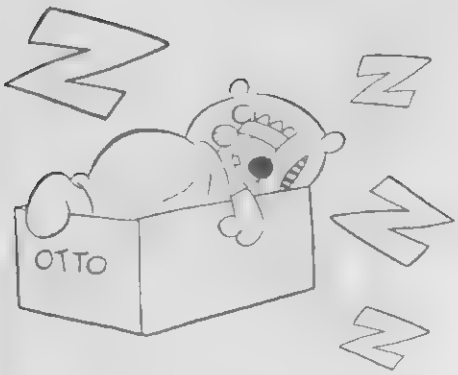
Yates: I'd like to add something here about submissions. It makes your work a lot better and a lot funnier if there is a return envelope included. And stamped, because it seems the worst kind of work comes in a wooden box, six feet long and twenty feet high that costs $50 to send and there's no way to get it back except to pay for it. In that case, my secretary writes and asks for the postage, but we do want to encourage people to make submissions. It makes it easier to get the material back if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included.

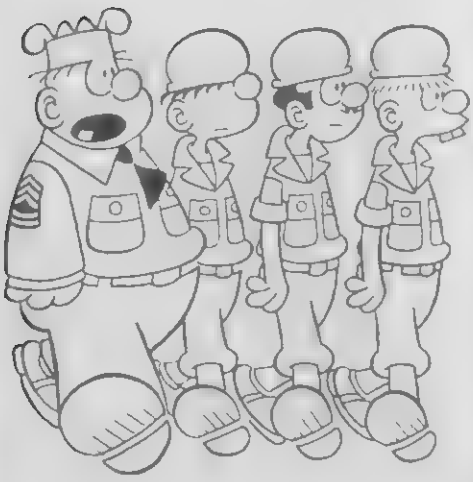
If it's a strip, you could just scale your strips from your local paper to that shape. In the beginning, you want to show the syndicate editor what the concept is, your characters, quality of gags and so forth.

Question: My partner and I are two females who already have a lawyer, so we're ahead of the game already. But what we would like to know as far as copyright goes; before we submit it to a syndicate, wouldn't we have to copyright it first?

"I recall Schulz (Charles Schulz of Peanuts) saying to his chagrin that he meets people all the time, especially younger people, who don't know that he draws a comic strip. All they know (is) television."

—Milton Caniff





Mendez: If it's possible for you to run the material even once, in a college or local newspaper, you can send for a copyright form in Washington and copyright the material. That doesn't mean you are completely protected. If you send the material to a syndicate it is possible to copyright the material by simply filling out a copyright form and sending it to Washington and register the material.

Question: When you're evaluating a new feature, Bill, how much do you take licensing into account?

Yates: I personally don't take that into account in the beginning. As I said, I judge it as a strip and if you get the cart before the horse, you can get into a lot of trouble. The licensing needs the support of the strip. There are people in licensing, greeting cards, everything out there who come to syndicates all the time trying to get their characters syndicated in a comic strip. It's one of the greatest forms of advertising in the world. You don't have to pay for it and you get paid for it. This is very important to the syndicate, but I think the strip has to succeed on its own and I don't think licensing will help it. It helps somewhat, but if it's a bad strip it's not going to make it as a strip. A lot of syndicates will find licensing will earn a hell of a lot more than the comic strip.

Charlie Schulz who draws **Peanuts** grosses, I think $250,000,000 a year or something like that. And with the strip he makes only $1,000,000.

Caniff: I recall Schulz himself saying to his chagrin that he meets people all the time, especially younger people, who don't know that he draws a comic strip. All they know are the television shows, the **Peanuts** products. The poor little strip is lost on these younger people. The whole image is the licensed products. And it says something because the strip is the first love before any licensing can come about.

Mendez: I was wondering if you were aware of the fact the New York Times during 1907 and 1908 ran a comic strip and they were not able to buy features from various newspaper syndicates. So after two years they dropped their feature, which was based on bears. I was at the Times a few years ago, involved with an exhibit of comic art in New York City, and that raised the point of why they didn't run comics. They said they would have loved to have run comics, but nobody wanted to sell them to them at the time.

Caniff: The New York Times Company owns 31 papers, 30 of which carry comic strips.

MARVEL COMICS

The Thing 30—Carlin; Wilson

Daredevil 225—O'Neil; Mazzucchelli; DeMuider

The New Mutants 34—Claremont; Leialoha

Web of Spider-Man 9—Fingeroth; McLeod

West Coast Avengers 3—Englehart; Milgrom; Sinnott

Planet Terry 9—Manak; Kremer; D'Agostino

Fraggle Rock 5—Kay; Severin

Strawberry Shortcake 5—Kay, Post, Edelman

Thundercats 1—Michelinie; Mooney; Breeding

Dreadstar and Company 6—Starlin

Squadron Supreme 4—Gruenwald; Hall; Beatty

Sectaurs 4—Mantlo; Geiger; DelBeato

The Incredible Hulk Annual 14—Byrne; S. Buscema

Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe Deluxe Edition 1

Starstruck 5—E. Lee; Kaluta

The Bozz Chronicles 1—Michelinie; Blevins

The Life of Captain Marvel 5—Starlin; Diverse Hands

The Amazing Spider-Man 271—DeFalco; Frenz; Rubinstein

Captain America 312—Gruenwald, Neary, Janke

Power Pack 17—Simonson; Brigman; Wiacek

Micronauts 15—Gillis; Jones; Bulanadi

Alpha Flight 29—Mantlo; Mignola; Talaoc

Wally the Wizard 9—Brown

Top Dog 5—Herman; Kremer; Roettcher

Heathcliff 5—Gallagher; Kremer; Roettcher

Doctor Strange 74—Stern; Badger; Austin

Groo the Wanderer 10—Aragones with Evanier

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Thor Annual 13—Zelelnetz; J. Buscema

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Fantastic Four 285—Byrne; Gordon

Iron Man 201—O'Neil; Bright; Akin; Garvey

Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man 109—David; Buckler; Breeding

Star Wars 102—Duffy; Martin

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Marvel Graphic Novel 19: The Witch of Acheron—Kraar; Kwapisz; Gil

JOHN BYRNE

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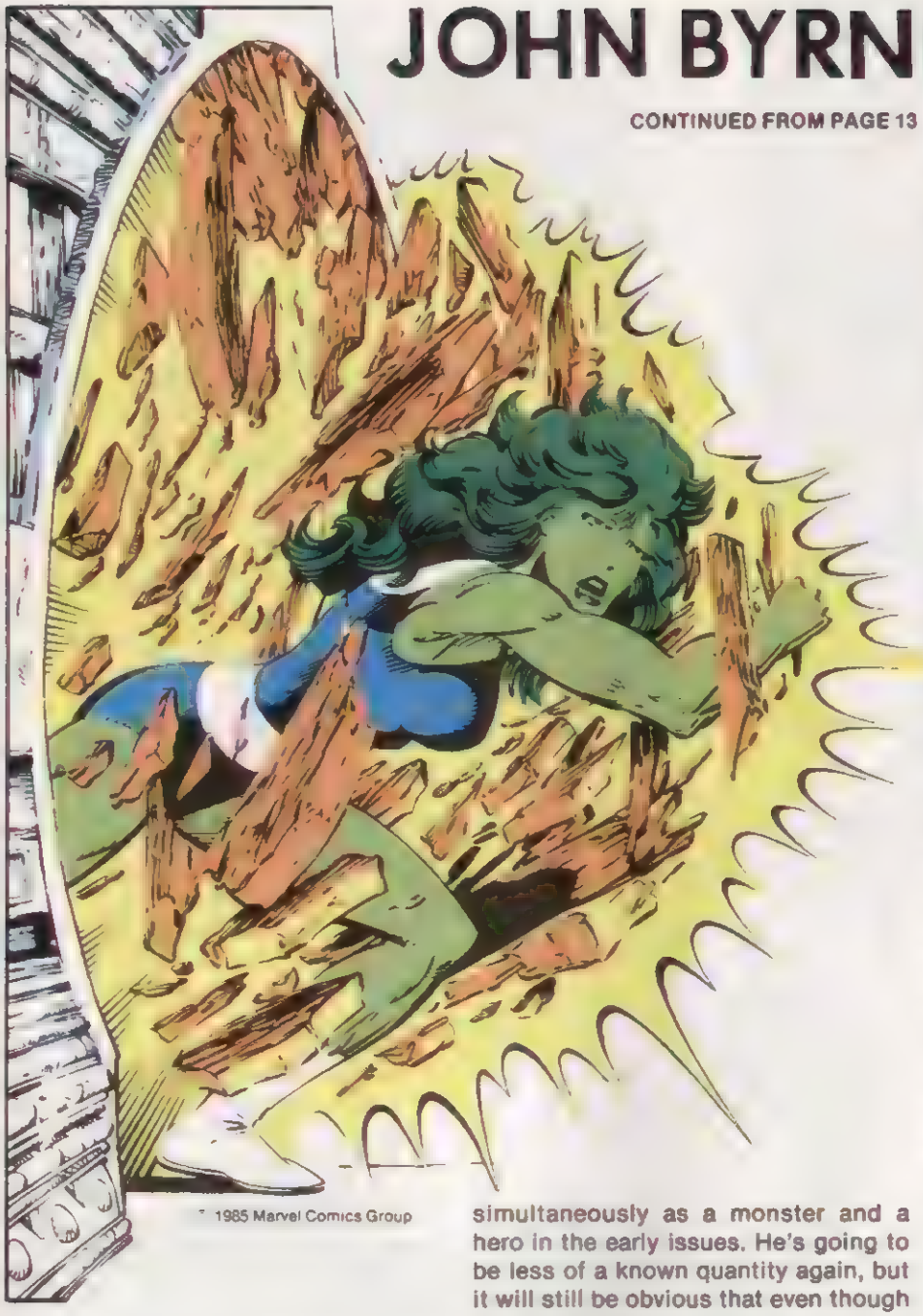

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very different form—physically different, emotionally different and much more like The Thing of the first three or four issues. Even going to 4 is going a bit far because he was starting to mellow out even then. We're going to go back to a Thing who is angrier about being The Thing. More bitter, more Thing-like. He's turned into rockman. He's sort of quasi-Thing these days; he's not a monster any more. He's cute.

What I've been pushing towards is to make him not cute any more. The Thing is somebody you should be frightened of, not somebody you should want to go and cuddle.

"Remember, the public regarded him simultaneously as a monster and a hero in the early issues. He's going to be less of a known quantity again, but it will still be obvious that even though this guy is ugly and nasty and snarls at everybody, he still does good work. There's no way to get around the fact that this guy's on our side, that he's one of the good guys.

"That, of course, was the charm of these first issues of the Fantastic Four—the inherent contradiction of the monster as good guy, as opposed to the cliche of the monster as automatic bad guy.

"Stan Lee, in structuring those early days, clearly wanted to take every comic cliche he could lay hands on and then twist it. He did that very much with the FF. He took the first ten years of the existence of Marvel Comics, when it was all 'I Battled Groot' and

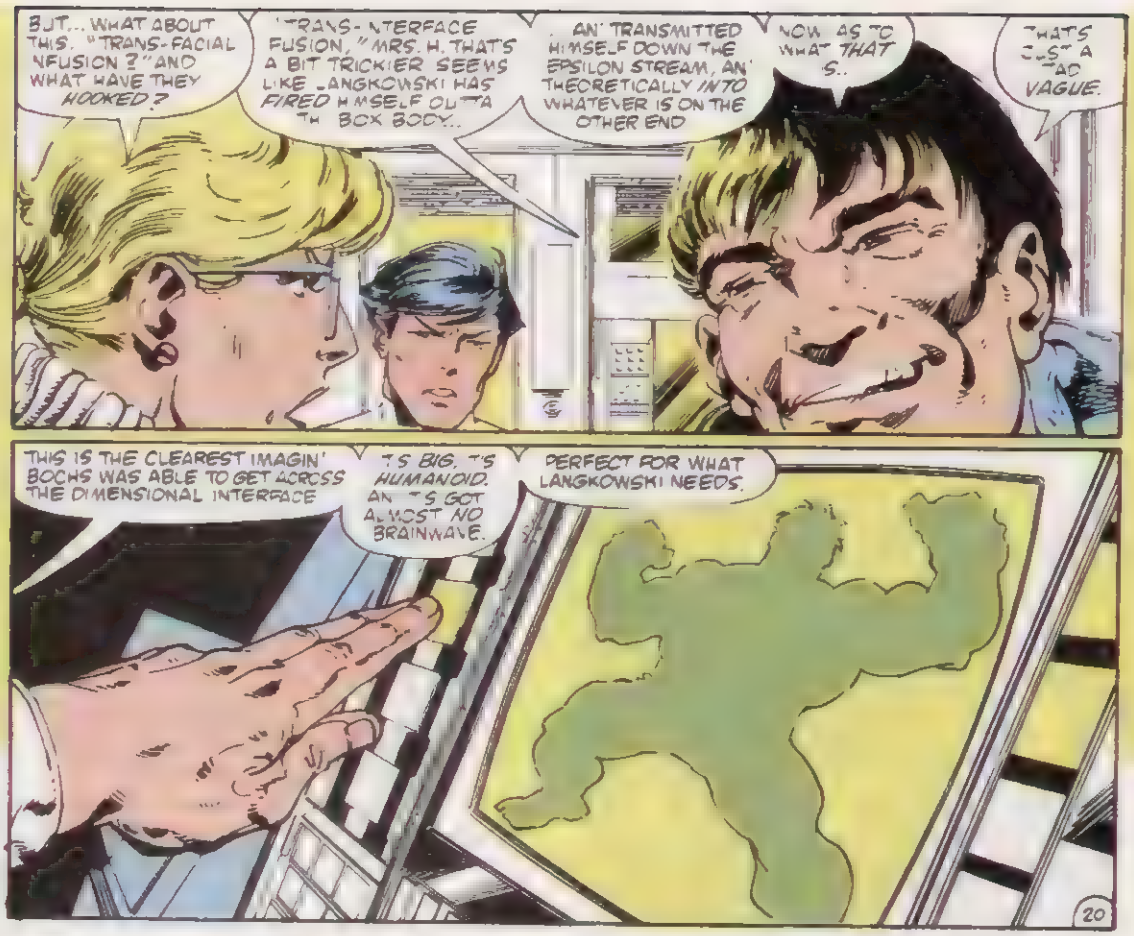
things like that and took your standard-issue monster and twisted it—made him the good guy.

"The Thing will come back as a permanent member of The Fantastic Four. We're not sure at this point what will happen to She-Hulk. Obviously she's still active in The Avengers. We're discussing the possibility of giving her her own series again if the graphic novel sells well enough to merit that.

"Hopefully, if I have to tie down my contribution, that's it. The people are looking at themselves, each other and the group as a whole differently now. Not vastly differently, because the core of the first 100 issues or so certainly set a course that doesn't have to be deviated from too badly. But in order to create that illusion of change, we have to rework the dynamics periodically."

Over several years of storytelling about the same characters in monthly doses, some tales work well and some do not. It is interesting that the view of the storyteller does not always coincide with that of his audience. He may regard a popular story in a less satisfied way—and of course the reverse is also true. Which stories does John Byrne feel failed to achieve their goals?

"There have been two stories which didn't work as well as I had hoped they would. The one I did early last year with the Messiah character that brought back The Mole Man kind of lost itself halfway through and stumbled to an end. The same thing more or less happened to the Reed Richards' father story. The single most satisfying story that I have done is the one I just did, FF 285. It's the story of a 14-year-old kid, short little wallflower type guy, who idolizes The Human Torch so much that one day he sets himself on fire. The story is about the repercussions this event has on the Torch.


BUT... WHAT ABOUT THIS. "TRANS-FACIAL NFUSION ?" AND WHAT HAVE THEY HOOKED ?
'TRANS-NTERFACE FUSION," MRS. H. THAT'S A BIT TRICKIER SEEMS LIKE LANGKOWSKI HAS FIRED HMSELF OU TA TH BOX BODY..
AN' TRANSMITTED HIMSELF DOWN THE EPSILON STREAM, AN' THEORETICALLY INTO WHATEVER IS ON THE OTHER END
NOW AS TO WHAT THAT S..
THAT'S JUS' A TAD VAGUE.
THIS IS THE CLEAREST IMAGIN' BOCHS WAS ABLE TO GET ACROSS THE DIMENSIONAL INTERFACE
T'S BIG, T'S HUMANOID. AN' T'S GOT ALMOST NO BRAINWAVE.
PERFECT FOR WHAT LANGKOWSKI NEEDS.
20

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"It was a very satisfying story to do. It allowed me to get into a lot of things; fantasy/reality elements. Without coming out and saying, 'Well, these are just comic characters,' I was able to address elements of the fantasy/reality line that fans always seem to be trying to cross.

"The basic thrust of my story, although it's disguised because we don't want to offend anybody, is that these things don't happen if the people in charge (which means parents or parental figures) do their job right.

"This kid in this particular story falls into this idolizing of the Torch, this whole situation, this dovetailing trap, and ends up with him killing himself because his parents are not there. They're too busy with their lives to pay any attention to his life.

"My whole philosophy in childrearing has always been: if you have children, that's your job right there. If you have a job outside, you have to divide your time so that the kid gets exactly as much attention as he would if you were there all the time.

"This is the underlying thrust of this story. My reaction whenever I hear about somebody saying you can't do this or that on TV because people will emulate it, or the Warner Brothers cartoons have to be chopped up because they're too violent, is always, 'I grew up with that stuff when people weren't chopping the guts out of the Warner Brothers cartoons. When Darren McGavin was playing Mike Hammer and blowing people away on camera on TV all the time and I never felt the need to emulate any of that because my parents took the time to explain to me the difference between fantasy and reality. I never felt the urge to tie a red cape around my neck and jump off the garage roof and I never felt the urge to stick a piece of dynamite down my cat's throat and set it off because I understood that these things are not real. You can't do that.'

"It doesn't really matter if this story reaches the parents as long as it reaches the kids because it is pointing out to the kids the fine line between fantasy and reality.

"If it reaches parents, fine. I'm not going to change parents' ways of thinking. Parents of the world are not going to be revolutionarily turned around with a comic book story. But the kids who read it will be able to perceive why the damage happens to this child. If they can pick up on that and apply it to their own lives, then the story is successful. If parents also pick it up, then it's just gravy. It's just icing on the cake.

"The morality of the stories I write has to be different from if I was writing for a different audience because we're doing it for children. I keep reminding myself that the audience we're aiming for are the kids who, forty years ago, would have been reading Tom Swift, Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys. That is the literary niche that comic books seem to have filled.

"Obviously we have young children. Today they seem to be far more advanced emotionally, intellectually than I was at an equivalent age. I have a 14 year old daughter who is at least the equivalent of what I was when I was 17 (probably beyond that). I was incredibly naive as a child.

"So, there is on the one hand the need to play to that higher level of intellect, emotional maturity and comprehension that the kids have. But on the other hand, a realization that they are still just kids, that it is a child's medium, that we really don't want to get into too much heavy stuff all of the time. Yes, we can do death, miscarriages, drugs, abortion and God

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JOIN THEM AS THEY SEEK A MAN'S SOUL
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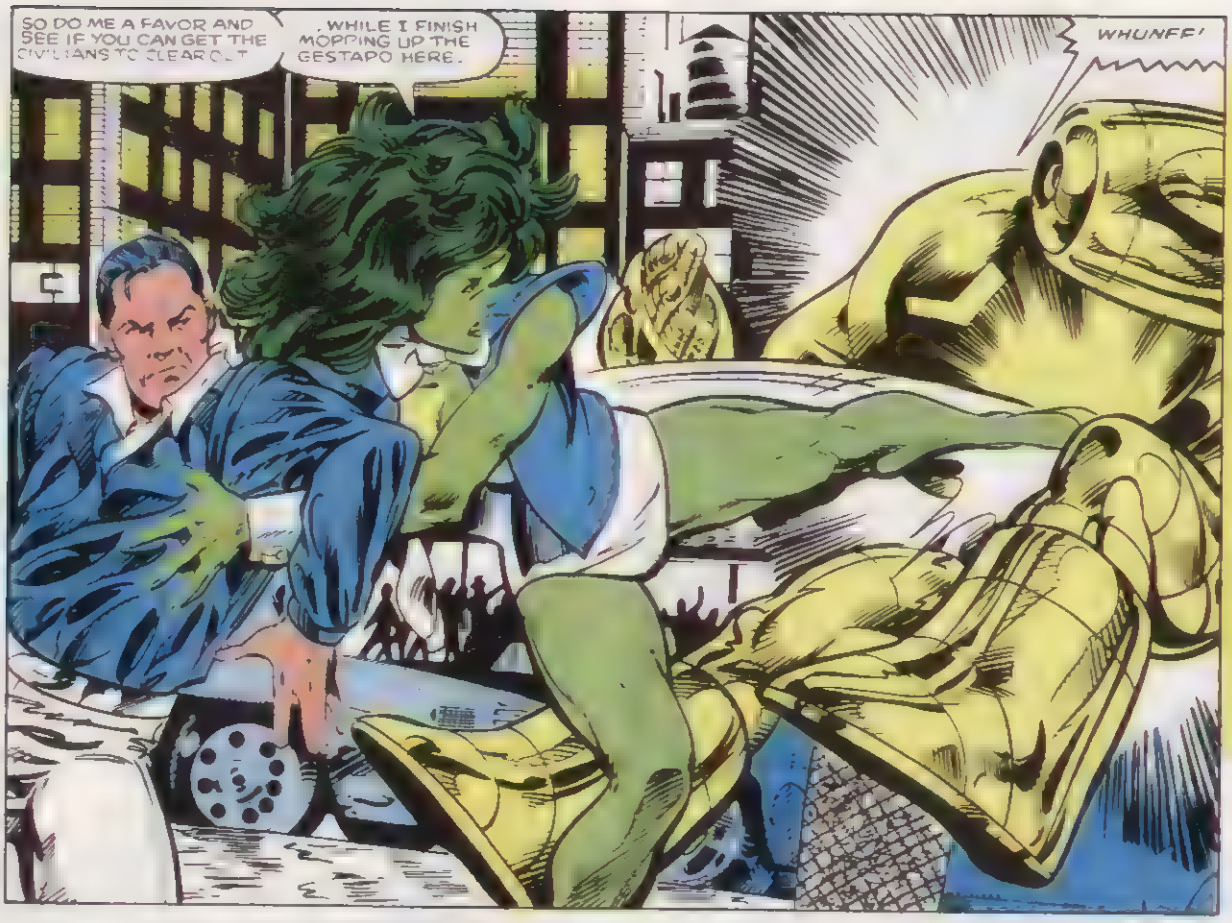
SO MANY MEMORIES HAUNT THIS PLACE, GHOSTS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS LONG GONE.



John Byrne is working on a She Hulk graphic novel

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knows what as long as we handle it properly. But it has to be tempered by the fact that these are children. You don't want to constantly lay the real world at a child's feet, because...you only get to be a kid once. Too many kids are too eager to grow up.

"So, in the FF, I try to say, 'Here are some of the elements of being grown up, but mostly it's still for you kids, you 12 year olds.' "

Aside from The Fantastic Four, there was one other important team created by Lee and Kirby in the early days of Marvel Comics. This one gathered the characters regarded as the mainstays of the Marvel Universe. That team was The Avengers and the roster included Iron Man, Thor and the Hulk, all of whom retain their own titles to this day. The most powerful member of the team was clearly The Hulk.

"I've always liked The Hulk. I've had a fondness for him that goes back to the first issue of his that I ever read, which was number 5 (I always read issue 5 of Marvel Comics), and although I've never really done the character to any extent, it's always been bubbling in the back of my mind, this desire to do The Hulk.

"One day I was lying in bed and thinking to myself, 'I wonder what I would do if I got The Hulk?' The effect was just as if somebody knocked over a domino in my brain. Suddenly, 14 issues worth of stories just fell into my head. I went, 'Oh gosh, maybe I'd better go out and do The Hulk.'

"So, the next day I went to Carl Potts and said, 'Is Mantlo tired of doing The Hulk yet?' He said no. I said, 'Let me know the minute he is.' That was about a year and a half ago.

TOO MANY HEROES SPOILED THE FUN

"Before Bill got tired of doing The Hulk, I got tired of doing Alpha Flight. So I arranged for this swap to occur. Part of the problem with **Alpha Flight** was that it was a John Byrne creation. The 12-year-old fan who lives in my head is a very important part of my approach to comics, and that 12-year-old fan was having no fun at all with **Alpha Flight**, because Lee and Kirby didn't create it! It boiled down to saying, 'I've pretty much told the stories I wanted to tell with these characters. I've tried to make it different from all the other books because the fan magazines' reaction when it was announced was 'ho-hum, another group book.'

"My reward for my efforts has been constantly decreasing sales, plummeting sales as a matter of fact. I said, 'Okay, whatever it is I want to do with this book clearly is not what the readership wants. I cannot give them what they want with this book. But I know I can give them what they want with The Hulk.'

"My whole approach to **Alpha Flight** was: There is an imaginary realm in which each of these characters has their own book. **Alpha Flight** was this sort of roving title that picked up on issues of their own mags. So you'd get a North Star story or a Sasquatch story, sometimes you'd get a team story where they'd group together. But the teamups would be rare. The thrust of the book would be the individuals rather than the group. Having them scattered all over Canada helped me to do that.

"Most of the letters that I got were complaints that these were just solo stories, and why didn't I put them together? So in the last eight or nine months I was on the book, I threw up my hands and said, 'I'll give them what they want.' This is when I realized I really couldn't give 'em what they want.

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"I can't really do that. Mantlo can. Mantlo's approach has been exactly to put 'em all together and have 'em go fight crime. Fine with me. Now I can go do The Hulk and give the readers what they want from the character, which is breaking big stuff and snarling and being mean.

HULK STOMP!

"We're going back to the roots of The Hulk, but more slowly than we did with the F.F. **The Hulk**, because of the convolutions of story that Bill has been doing the past five years, was not in a position where I could pick it up and say the last 100 issues didn't happen, the way I could on the **FF**. So I'm having to do about six issues that gets him back to a point where I **can** say the last 100 issues didn't happen.

"You remember **Hulk** originally ran for six issues and then was cancelled. I will be hitting a point that will essentially be issue seven of that run. Then we'll go from there.

"I'm doing what I did on the **FF**—I'm turning the clock back. My feeling is that Lee and Kirby really knew what they were doing. They blew it a little bit because he changed personality and powers from issue to issue. So I'm distilling it down to sort of a definitive Hulk, which they probably would have done if they'd had another few issues. We're trying to get back to that primal: Bruce Banner becomes The Hulk; sometimes he's in control, sometimes he's not. The schism is left brain/right brain, rage versus reason.

"And there is going to be a Rick Jones counterpart.

"Hulk's intelligence is going to come and go. The Hulk of the first three issues was a nasty Bruce Banner. Then in issues 4, 5 and 6, he varied between a nasty Bruce Banner and a total brute. That's the image I'm going to be going for. You're going to have a nasty Bruce Banner who fluctuates towards being a virtual mindless brute occasionally. The situation is essentially, Banner is in control of Hulk as long as he lets Hulk out periodically. If he doesn't let Hulk out occasionally, there will come times when the Hulk breaks out. In the former situation he's in control, in the latter he's not.

"While we're setting this up he doesn't realize that he needs to let Hulk out. By the time he realizes that it's a necessity. Hopefully, I'll have figured out how to get around that (but that's not coming around for about two years anyway).

"The Hulk comes back to Earth in my last issue of **Alpha Flight**. The next issue he fights Alpha Flight. When he leaves that book, I go with him, so the next time we see Hulk in his own book I'm doing him.

"We start out with The Hulk just as he was before that whole business with Rocket Racoon when he first gained his intelligence back. We have him at that point for one issue, then we seriously start messing with that whole premise. Bruce Banner becomes physically separated from The Hulk.

"My third issue is going to feature the bicoastal Avengers. People from both Avengers teams are going to come in and check out what's going on with Hulk. They realize he's different because Bruce Banner isn't in there anymore. It's a totally bestial Hulk; in fact, he doesn't recognize any of them, he's never seen them before.

"Hulk's mentality is an extension of Banner. Take Banner out of there and you've got a blank slate. This is, for intents and purposes, a totally blank mind.

"Banner becomes the head of the new Project Hulkbuster because he is the

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JOHN BYRNE'S TRIBUTE TO JACK KIRBY

one who knows better than anybody else, he figures, how to destroy The Hulk. Banner was never really meek and mild. He was shy. He was one of those hyper-directional guys: so involved in what he's doing he doesn't realize the full ramifications of it. He was a nerd! So was I in those days, so it was easy for me to tie into this character.

"Hulk is always a big green mindless monster. The World's trying to destroy him like they've never tried before because now there's no threat to Bruce Banner. We were always holding back in the past; we were always worried about killing Banner if we killed Hulk. Now we can kill The Hulk. We've got The Avengers, we've got Doc Samson involved in this; and Banner himself is out to destroy The Hulk. For him, it's really riding the vengeance trail, because he's angry. He's lost all these years of his life to Hulk. Now's the first time he can actually strike back.

"This is sounding deliberately confusing. Later on we're going to create a point at which Banner will have to take control of Hulk again. I'm not going to spell out in great detail what will happen. The first part will be Hulk versus the good guys. The issue when I of-

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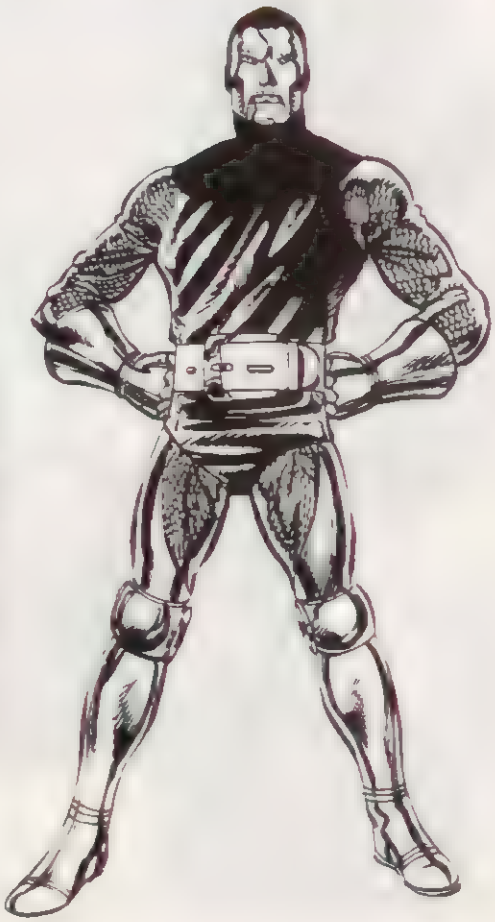
ficially get Hulk back to the way I want him to be, I bring back the Metal Master. I also tie up the last loose end from Hulk before I took it over, which is that Bill had Alicia Masters sculpt an adamantium statue of Hulk, and the Metal Master is going to bring that to life, which is going to fight the live Hulk.

"By the time I get it to where I want it to be, he's going to be about 60% hero and 40% bad guy. He does good things, not always necessarily for the right reasons, and sometimes he does out and out bad things.

"One of the elements we're going to be getting into is that the world is going to come to believe that Hulk is dead. So Hulk is going to be functioning as kind of a secret identity for Banner. We're going to get back to the 'creature of the night' that he was in the first few issues, because you can't have Hulk as a secret identity if he's running around at high noon. He's going to be lurking in shadows.

"I'm going to be bringing in some of the elements of the tv show. I'm thinking of possibly tossing in a reporter who's trying to track down these things that could only be caused by the Hulk. He won't be trying to prove



there's a Hulk, but will be saying that things are clearly not what they appear to be. This is the guy who answers the questions when someone picks up their first issue and goes, 'What's going on here?' This guy's going to ask the same questions.

"I hope **The Hulk** becomes a fandom favorite. I talk about my Faithful Fifty. I seem to have about 50,000 fans out there who go wherever I go and read whatever I write. If we assume that all of them are not already reading **Hulk**, then if they follow me **The Hulk** is going to be selling better than **FF** shortly. Potentially, I hope that the fans will be drawn back, that the book is revitalized.

"I don't want to diminish what's been happening. I think Bill did some interesting stuff. Carl Potts made the comment that they demonstrated they could do more with the Hulk than just 'Hulk smash!'

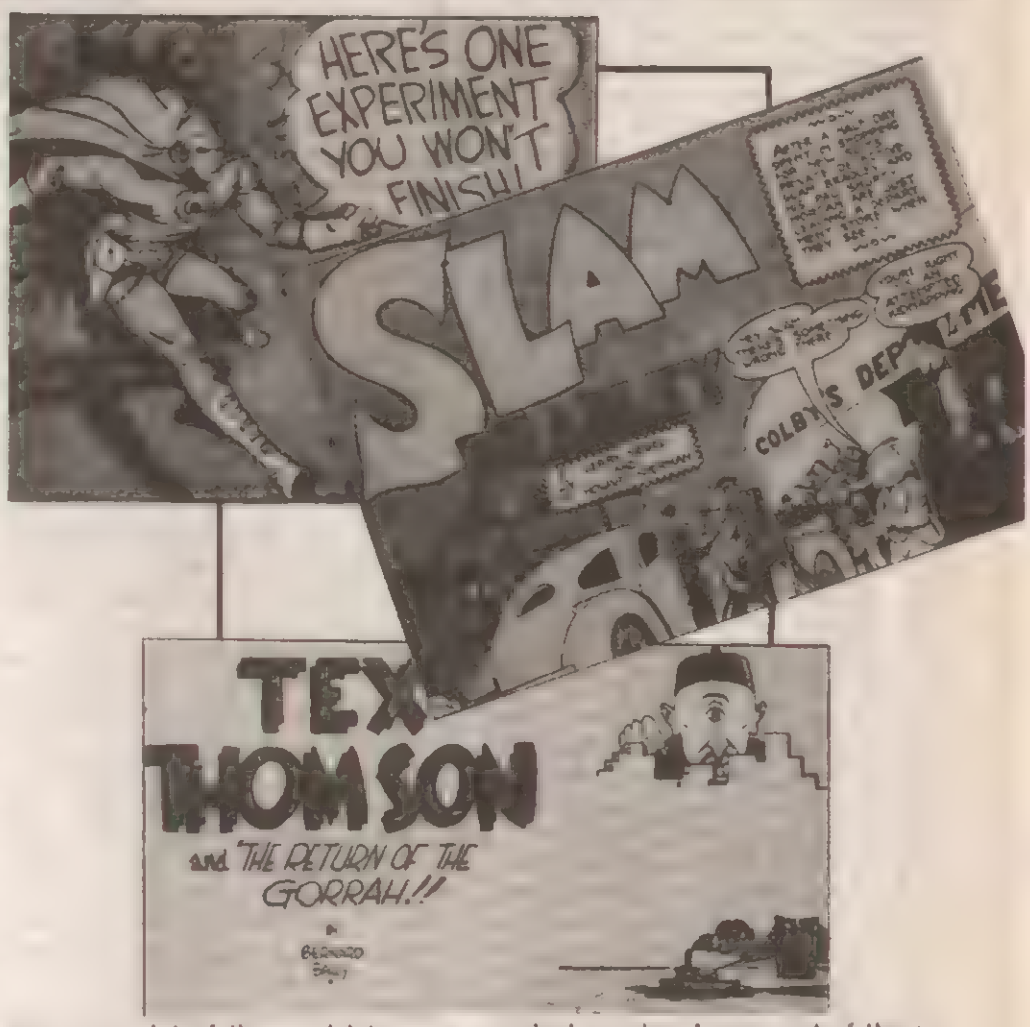
"You can certainly do more than just 'Hulk smash' with Hulk, but it has to be 'as well,' not 'instead,' I think.

"**Hulk** has not been a major Capital F Fan Favorite. But I think he can be. If I pull this off, I think it will be again."

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

In this article we offer you some oral history, letting several artists who worked for DC during the 1930s and 1940s speak for themselves. All the material is taken from recent interviews conducted by Ron Goulart or Jerry DeFuccio.



It was in the 1930s that John Lehti—who signed himself Kack Lehti back then—went to work for DC. After service in World War II he was art director on the innovative and short-lived **Picture News Comics**. Graduating to newspaper strips, Lehti did **Tom of the Big Top** for King Features and then drew **Tales of the Great Book** Sunday page for seventeen years. In his seventies and still active, he draws a Bible panel that he and a partner syndicate.

John Lehti: I forget who it was who said go up there to Dc if you want some work. I had been doing drybrush stuff and covers for the pulps. And that market was getting very, very thin, and so was I. I needed some money and that's how I started. The price in comics in those days was five bucks a page and you wrote the story, too, and you lettered it—the works. I started working for Vince Sullivan and then continued with Whit Ellsworth. **O'Malley of the Red Coat Patrol** (in **More Fun**) was the first thing I did. Although after the first month or so I was doing **O'Malley, Steve Conrad** (in **Adventure**), **Cotton Carver** (**Adventure**) and the **Crimson Avenger** (in **Detective**). I wrote them too. Did everything.

I think in about a year I got up to eight or ten bucks a page, something like that. There weren't any guidelines as to how to handle the characters. Although the Crimson Avenger, when I took it over, he had a cape and a gasgun and they told me, you know, make him a union suit hero. So I did that. At the time I never had to show pencils—they just accepted anything I did.

I was influenced by Alex Raymond. Well, I was a good friend of Alex. He gave me a lot of tips, and later was helpful to me when I did my first newspaper strip, **Tommy of the Big Top**. Whit Ellsworth was the one who got me the entree to King Features in the first place.

During the DC days, I worked at home. Brought my stuff in once a week. And you got paid right away. Right away. I had quite a few acquaintances up there, some close friends. Like Charlie Paris and Creig Flessel. I'd met Creig in Harvey Dunn's class, around 1934. Creig was very, very good.

I was drafted and served four years in the army. Fought in Italy, France, Holland. Got wounded, got the Bronze Star. Didn't do much art work in the service. I killed people is what I did.

Picture News was the first thing I worked on when I came out of the army. Whit Ellsworth knew I was getting out, and in the summer of 1945, when I'd just gotten back from Germany, he said, "Listen, if you're interested there's a job I can help you get." The thing that caused **Picture News** to fail was they couldn't get distribution. I even had Milt Gross working for me and I think that was about the last stuff he ever did. He did those drawings in the hospital. I used to call him at the hospital in California and talk about what we were going to do.

Right then, while I was with **Picture News** for six months, I had an idea for a circus strip. I did, oh, about two weeks of it and went to King Features on a Friday. And on Monday they called me up and said they wanted to do it.

In his teens when he went to work for DC, Hal Sherman initially drew funny filler pages. After a hiatus, he returned to draw the adventures of the Star Spangled Kid. He left comics in the late 1940s to pursue a career as a gag cartoonist.

Hal Sherman: There was a cartoon market out there and I was a cartoonist, so I contacted Whit Ellsworth. I did a lot of filler stuff for him (in **More Fun** and **New**). At the very beginning, even before that, I answered an ad for a cartoonist and it was at some hotel in midtown. I got there and I see a little guy in a very small room working on the blood and thunder, adventure stuff. He was looking for an assistant to work with him. That was Joe Shuster, working on Superman. He offered me something like two or three dollars a page. I just couldn't do it.

And since I really wasn't interested in the blood and thunder, I left and went to Hollywood. To try to visualize comedy scripts before they started shooting. I was in Hollywood for awhile and I decided it was not for me. My wife was homesick and she wanted to get out. So after a couple of months I decided to go back to New York and see if I could get back into the comic book field. I was doing freelance gags, which has always been a precarious field. I did up six sample pages, and I followed the guidelines of the stuff that was being done—Batman and so forth. I sent them to Whit Ellsworth. And I get a letter from Whit telling me, well, first it was Bob Kane with his fat little boys and girls and then he came up with Batman. Now here's Hal Sherman coming up with action. So come on back, we have a script for you.

Jerry Siegel had written the Star Spangled kid and they wanted me to illustrate it. So I went back and I created the logo and created all the characters, the drawing. And I suggested things to Siegel. About the car, for instance, to make it also a submarine, an airplane and so on. Actually that car was years ahead of the James Bond series.

The reason I left the Star Spangled Kid was I got drafted.

In comics from the middle 1930s, Bernard Bailey has the distinction of having provided the artwork for two of DC's earliest superheroes—Hourman and the Spectre. In the 1940s he also ran a shop that put together comic books for the Prize outfit and many lesser publishers. Among his employees were Gil Kane and Frank Frazetta. He's still active in the publishing area.

Bernard Bailey: As far as art training, I was self-taught. And I grew up in New York.

I started off with a magazine called...what [redacted] the name of it?...**Wow**.

I went to DC after Donenfeld took over from Nicholson. I was offered a job as editor, but I could make more money drawing so I didn't take it. I must've been eighteen or nineteen.

When I was there at DC Siegel came up with the feature the Spectre. The look of the character I created, the script he wrote. I worked in the office for awhile, then I started working at home. Siegel did the writing on the Spectre the whole time. The thing I created in the Spectre was his sidekick, Percival Popp the Super Cop. An interesting thing is that in many cases the side characters became more popular than the main characters. For the obvious reason that you could do more with them.

At the time, I feel, everything was being geared to Superman, who'd become their big property. At the height of his popularity, in the beginning, I had my Tex Thomson feature in **Action**. I created a cyclops character called the Gorrah. Now, they had a contest at that time. The kids sent in the names of the characters they liked the best and that character ran so close to Superman in popularity that they made me cut it out. Really.

The Hourman was another one that we had trouble with, when I added the additional characters the Minute Men. That also became a problem, because they were becoming popular and I had to subdue them. We were doing a lot of work and there was only so much you could handle. So you stayed with the one you thought was the better of the characters. And so Hourman I gradually just dropped.

When I was working for DC, I wasn't on salary. It was always page rates.

The other Sherman at DC was Howard. Thirty when he entered comics, he'd been a pulp illustrator for several years prior to that. He drew one of DC's most interesting second team superheroes, Dr. Fate, as well as Slam Bradley. He did the Wyoming Kid for **Western Comics** as well as quite a bit of work for **Real Fact** and **Gang Busters**. Leaving comics in the 1960s, Sherman went into package design for a large toy company. Currently he does freelance work in the design and advertising areas.

Howard Sherman: I graduated from Pratt Institute in 1931. The Great Depression was in progress. It was most difficult to find art work for money in those days. Finally I received some black and white illustrations from a pulp magazine publisher whose name escapes me, but he published **Real Western**, **Real Detective** and others. Then I got some work from Jack Schiff, who was an editor at Ned Pines, doing illustrations and oil painted covers for the pulps. Soon after that they switched over to producing comic books and they asked me if I could come up with an idea for a strip. Which I did. It was called **Three Comrades**. I wrote it, lettered it, drew it and colored it. I think I received ten dollars per page. I heard that DC Comics was looking for people, so I contacted Whit Ellsworth, who was the head editor at the time. He gave me the script for Dr. Fate to start with, at $12 a page. Then Slam Bradley.

I was slower in production than some of the other artists. It took me about ten to fourteen days to pencil and ink six pages.

I have no stories to tell about my contact with editors. It seemed to be strictly business with them. The only one who seemed to have any interest in me personally was Whit Ellsworth, and he left for California. I worked for them until 1963, when they became disenchanted with me and I with them.

Publishers Picks

BY HAL SCHUSTER

This month I am going to try something a bit different. It is sure to get just about everyone angry at me, and thus should be quite a bit of fun! 'If I survive I'll try it again with DC at some time in the future.

Now that I have hopefully perked your interest, I'll be more exact as to what follows. I am going to tackle the thankless task of judging each and every Marvel comic book, one by one. I do not expect anyone out there to agree with my judgements; in fact, it would be scary if somenoe did agree with me across-the-board.

The Thing This is about one of my favorite characters. In the entire comic book universe, I probably most identify with him and with Nick Fury, SHIELD's stalwart (ex)director. And yet I haven't been able to read the book in quite some time. It simply goes nowhere and is very boring. (Sorry Mike, I know that you are a very good writer and quite an editor, but this one just doesn't seem to work.) The book is scheduled for cancellation and the Thing, somewhat changed back to his earliest incarnation, is destined to rejoin the FF.

DAREDEVIL This is another book which seems to miss the mark. It has hit occasionally and spectacularly at times, but overall it has never been very good since it was created as Marvel's answer to The Batman.

NEW MUTANTS This one is a little better. The stories are interesting, if convoluted, and the artwork is certainly different, although it often gets in the way of a story rather than telling it. A cleaner style might work better on this.

THE WEB OF SPIDERMAN This is a good Spiderman book. Not the best one now being done and certainly not the best that Spiderman has ever been, but well worth the reading.

RAWHIDE KID Why couldn't they have left him alone? At least they haven't stuffed and mounted the Kid yet.

THE SQUADRON SUPREME At least someone is doing the Justice League of America proud. If DC is going to replace the finest team book they have outside of the Titans, and one that should no doubt be the best team book from any company bar none, with a bunch of breakdancing street kids, then someone should pick up the slack. I don't know how they are getting away with it legally, considering the one-to-one relationship between the League and the Squadron members, but everyone should give a loud cheer for Mark Gurenwald, Bob Hall and Terry Beatty, three guys who have been fans of the League for almost as long as I have.

THE SECTAURS Skip it!

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN This has been Marvel's flagship title for many years, and it features their most licensed character. You can find just about anything with Spiderman's mug on it, from cups to beach towels. For many years the book has been worthless. Now it reflects some of the glory of the early days. Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz do an excellent and evocative job. Lee and Ditko, of course, are who they evoke.

CAPTAIN AMERICA Sometimes this book is good. Only sometimes.

POWERPACK When Louise Jones Simonson announced that she was going to give up editing the Mutant books to do a title about a bunch of kids, almost everyone groaned. I didn't. But then again, I had talked to Louise and learned of her plans in some detail. More importantly, I learned that she

worships at the feet of Robert Heinlein, just as I do. This may be the best book that Marvel publishes.

MICRONAUTS This book about a bunch of toys seems somewhat childish.

ALPHA FLIGHT John Byrne says that he and his readers can't seem to get together as to what this book should be about. So he's leaving for greener pastures. Good idea!

DOCTOR STRANGE One issue is good. The nest is excellent. The third is good again. But somehow they never seem to be the same book.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK One of Lee and Kirby's earliest creations. And John Byrne is going to do it! I predict this to become one of Marvel's very best.

THE AVENGERS This is to Marvel what the Squadron Supreme is to DC. Under the hands of John Buscema and Roger Stern it fills some very big boots—well. it is one of the few comic books published today that I really look forward to.

CONAN I never did like barbarians much, although this book certainly looks pretty.

X-MEN This is everyone's favorite comic book, and on occasion I can understand why. Most of the time, though, it resembles **Dallas** done with capes.

ROM I used to really like this one. It's unfortunate that they didn't terminate the title when they ended the war. The book is scheduled for cancellation.

MOON KNIGHT Moon Knight appears to be an updated Shadow. Since no one is doing the Master of Darkness, it is certainly an acceptable substitute. E.R. Cruz adds fine inks to this worthwhile title.

G.I. JOE This one seemed pretty good when it started out, but then quickly lost any direction that it had.

MEANWHILE...
WHEN THIS FORM WAS ATTACKED.. THAT WAS EXPERIENCE! THIS PERCEIVING OF OTHERS IS NOT EXPERIENCE. OBSERVING, ALONE, IS NOT EXPERIENCE!
AND YET, MUCH OBSERVING GOES ON HERE!
SONY
SALE ON VCRS
TAPE DECK
VIDEO

FANTASTIC FOUR Another Byrne title begun by Lee and Kirby. Ties for recognition as Marvel's best comic book. Real family, real plots and a good pacing of action combine to create a very fine story.

IRON MAN Give him back his suit and his company, already, and let's get on with the story. Years ago Stark was a giant of industry, Iron Man had interesting adventures and this was a good book. I doubt if things can ever be the same again.

PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDERMAN Yet another of the Wallcrawler's books. There is one a week, you know. We'll just have to see if Sal Buscema does Ditko as well as they do him over in the other titles.

THOR Doesn't Louise Jones's husband do a nice job? He is one of the best writer/artists in the industry. Walt Simonson had threatened to give up

the book ten issues ago. This is one of the few times that I am glad someone failed to keep their word.

THE NEW DEFENDERS This is an attempt to do the old X-Men while pretending not to. Fortunately they are planning to end this mess and replace it with a more honest title, **The X-Factor.**

SECRET WARS II This book has everybody. It's loads of fun but not nearly as good as the first war.

TRANSFORMERS Drawn by Mike Maneely and inked by Brad Joyce. Bet you've never heard of them. Here's a good reason why. I know they want to break into the industry, but are comics really as bad as Hollywood? Do you really have to do anything?

STAR WARS George Lucas knows the war is over. Too bad he hasn't told Marvel.

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SUPERHERO GAME?

The quality of a superhero game depends on how well it mirrors the superhero milieu. The game system should reflect "comic book reality"—character creation, powers usage and combat. The three main attractions of superhero comics are how heroes gain their powers (character creation), how they use their powers (powers usage) and how they fight (combat). Soap operatic considerations of who likes/loves/hates/is misunderstood by whom also appear in superhero games, but these are role playing considerations, not something that needs to be in the rules system.

HOW THE HERO CAME TO BE

All superhero games take one of two tracks toward depicting the creation of a hero. Games such as **Villains and Vigilantes, Golden Heroes** and **Heroes Unlimited** use a random system. The player rolls the dice and whatever numbers come up indicate what powers the character has. **V&V** and **Heroes Unlimited** also categorize the origins of the powers by whether they are magical or technological or simply the results of good training and experience. This system reflects comic book reality in that one hero generated in this manner may be little better than a normal bystander, while another might be able to give Superman a tangle. This inequality is true to comics but can lead to big troubles in running a game.

The other path to character creation is used in games such as **Champions, Superworld** and **Supergame**. This method is the points system, where the player receives a set number of points and a menu of characteristics and powers, each with a point cost. When the hero has spent all of his points he will have the characteristics and powers that the player wants. Of course, a character whose points are spent entirely for skills such as Detective work or Acrobatics will not have the same offensive and defensive capabilities as the character whose points were put into flame bolts and force fields. The theory is that he will be equally useful in a game because of his mastery of skills.

Despite this fond wish, the system still creates characters of vastly differing capacity who are a pain to gamemaster as a group. The points system does provide a bit of outside-the-game fun. It allows a player to figure out power combinations and justify their purchase within the limits given. Some "players" of this system almost never play a game, but enjoy themselves creating characters—often with far more care than that shown by some comic book writers. Advocates of the random system point out that they enjoy themselves just as much seeing what the dice give them. They don't have to remember complex arithmetic or pull out a pocket calculator.

What makes a "good" superhero creation system? Any method which results in characters whose analogs can be found in the four-color pages of the comic books. While such paragons as Superman are often beyond what can be generated easily by either system, such relative lightweights as Thor and Spider-Man

should be accessible. Otherwise, the system does not properly fit the superhero genre.

Space considerations force me to take this up again next issue when I will address the questions of powers usage and combat systems.

GOLDEN AGE OF CHAMPIONS

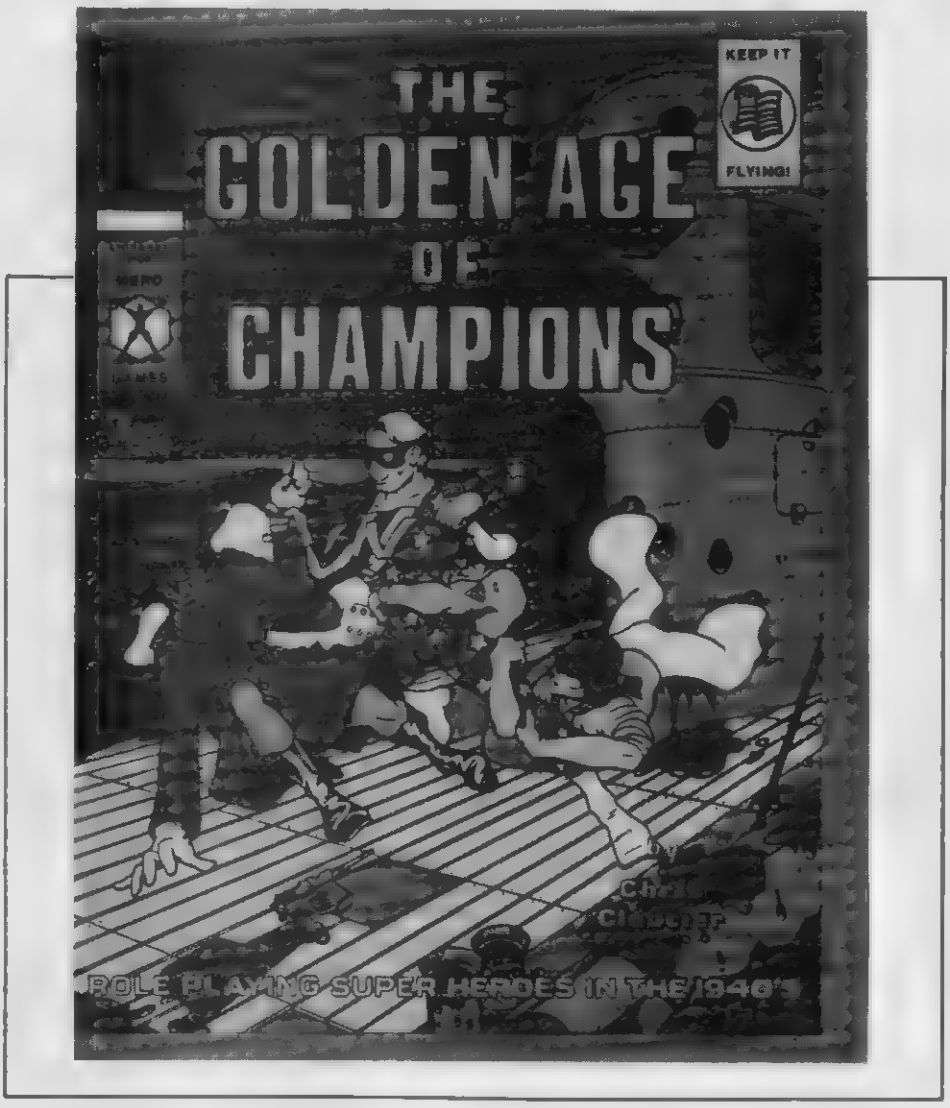
Golden Age of Champions from Firebird Limited of Michigan is the first licensed **Champions** supplement. It is fully compatible with **Champions**. It takes the game back in time to the 1940s, when superheroes first came into their own as Axis fighters extraordinaire.

This excellent addition to the **Champions** line is relatively current, utilizing the new rules found in the third edition of **Champions**. The book wisely refers readers to the game itself for information on commonly known rules and powers, concentrating in how to adapt a campaign into a good evocation of the 1940s, with lots of local color. The supplement spends almost 1/3 of its 94 pages discussing the war years, dealing with the draft (and why isn't your strapping young American youth of a superhero in the military?), a timeline, mini-bios of important people and ration cards. As one might expect from the publishers of **The Armory**, a collection of game writeups for weaponry, the rules devote many pages to specific war era and earlier weaponry in **Champions** terms. This is very appropriate for wartime adventures, when most of the opposition tended to be petty thugs with pistols.

The book sells for $9.95 and is useful even for non-gamers who want a good look at the time dealt with in Roy Thomas' **All-Star Squadron** and his old **Invaders** book.

MORE CHAMPIONS

Hero Games sponsors one of the nicest fan-oriented products in the superhero game biz, the Adventurer's Club. For $20.00 per year membership fee you receive a spiffy card, product discounts, a 2-4 page Hero Games newsletter that appears whenever former **COMICS FEATURE** columnist Ray Greer manages to find the time to do it and a quarterly magazine, **The Adventurer's Club**. Subscriptions to just the magazine run $10.

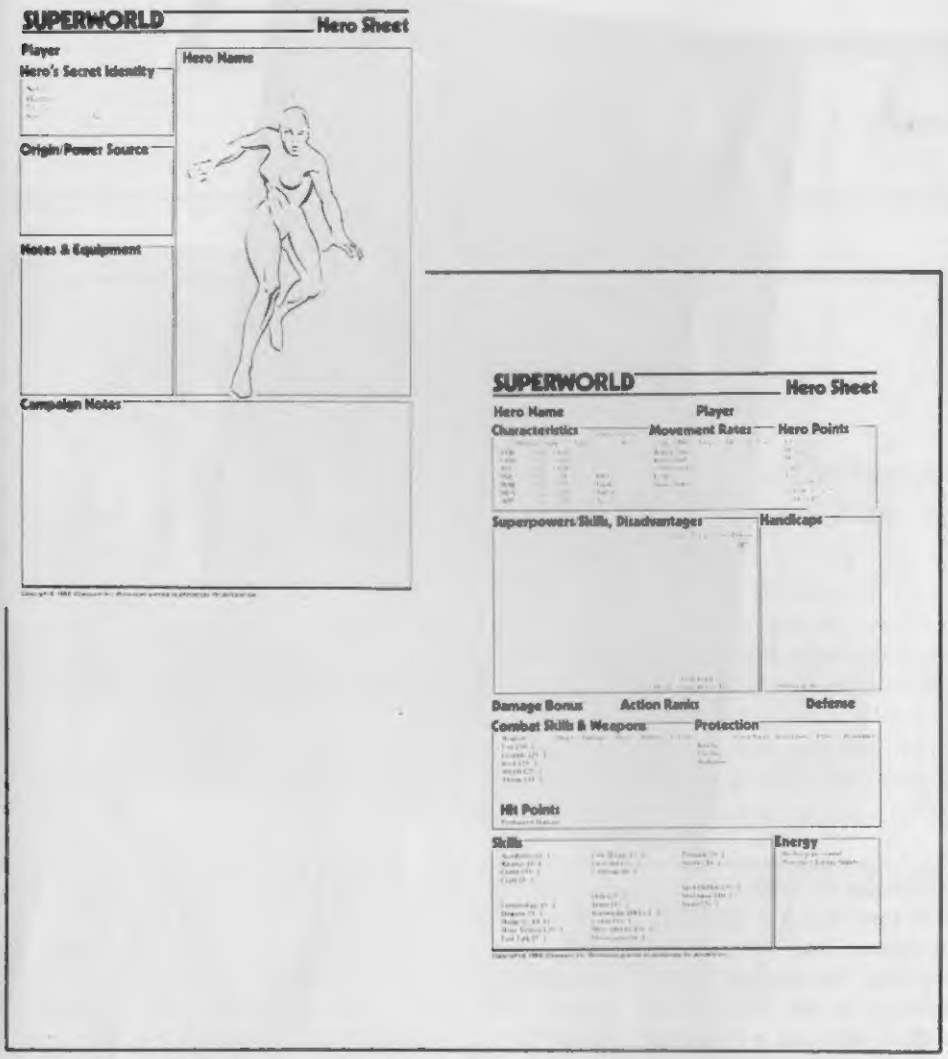


The sixth issue of the mag is just out and provides the reader with the changes in both the new version of **Champions** and the **Champions III** book. When you tack on the "Flawed Mirrors" article which provides guidelines for creating alternate worlds with a twist for heroes to blunder into and "Grasp, Inc.", a set of linked scenarios for use with either **Champions** or Hero's upcoming **Danger International**, then add all the regular columns, you can see that the half-size 48 pages in the zine are well worth the $2.50.

SUPERGAME CONT.

Last time around, space considerations only allowed me to point out that Dag Productions' **Supergame** has a few good points without having the space to take a good look at them. This time we'll do just that.

The Character Creation system uses point building similar to my own **Superworld** and Hero Games' **Champions**. The difference between **Supergame** and the latter games is that the players of **Superworld** and **Champions** may use any point total as long as they are paid for by disadvantage points. The **Supergame** hero must start with a flat 250 points. There are a few benefits for using such obvious



vulnerabilities as an easily-snatched gun, or powers which do not have all of the special effects normally associated with them, but in the main the player is not confronted with the mathematical challenge of balancing his hero. What he buys is what he gets. Every starting hero or villain in the game will be at approximately the same power level, even though the types of powers may be quite different.

This means that the hero does not have the role playing hooks that other games' disadvantage points provide, but these are often overused in character construction and under-utilized in actual play. Perhaps **Supergame** is better off depending on the players to role-play the real disadvantages inherent in their character concepts.

The powers list of a superhero game is always an attraction and often the reason a player of one system buys another—for power ideas. The list for this game is short. Many familiar powers are not dealt with at all, and the players must subsume them under catchall titles such as "Self-transformation" or even "Special Powers". Good luck!

Two excellent items in the book are a half-page dissertation on gamemaster use of villains and a comprehensive system for awarding experience points which could be translated into **Champions** with little problem.

The sparcity of powers descriptions and skill descriptions makes for a short book, 40 pages in all plus color cover. The pricetag is $8. There is rumor of a boxed edition coming up, but is hasn't hit yet. The rules are by Jay and Aimee Hartlove.

Supergame does have two supplementary modules, each with its own charms and problems.

Both modules are set in authors Jay and Aimee Hartlove's personal campaign area, the 21st century island nation of Poseidonis. **Supergame** began as an attempt to improve on the mechanics of the original superhero game, **Superhero 2044**. As I pointed out in my January column, that game suffered from an unclear system but had a good campaign background. **Supergame**'s authors use a similar setting for their improved system.

Reactor deals with Wagner Fusion Center Power Plant and various attempts by the criminal organization known as Vortex to take it over or destroy it. The book provides twelve supervillains who range from the fascinatingly grotesque Muscle and Leech to the rather mundane Dr. Freeze and Circuitron. The centerfold is a very cluttered grid map of the plant. Portions of the map are later reproduced in larger scale for use with specific scenarios.

The 16-page book also provides four scenarios for use of the reactor, ranging from a hostage situation to free villains already in jail to the use of the reactor to create a killing machine. Each scenario is described simply with a plan of attack for the villains. Other game publishers should take note of this technique for simple scenario writing. Everything the gamemaster needs is there with a minimum of wasted space.

Heroes of Poseidonis is a 24-page description of the basis for the Poseidonis campaign. It provides a character sheet (the first one ever!), vehicle building rules and complex instructions for jumping and running that require the use of a pocket calculator. Nine pages are taken up by descriptions of the Heroes of Poseidonis, a typical group. Except for acting as examples of how to build characters, these heroes are useless. Gamemasters need villains, not heroes. Their players should provide all

the necessary heroes.

Mostly, this book is a bit of egoboo for the players in the Hartloves' campaign. All their heroes are lovingly described and their world is put together in a handy reference form for future home campaigns. Despite the building and running rules, I cannot recommend this book.

HEROES UNLIMITED

Palladium Books extensively advertised their entry into the superhero market. The ads are obviously aimed at people who already play superhero games. The pitch: "You've played the rest, now play the best." I fear that I cannot agree.

The initial package is pleasing to the eye, with a dynamic Jim Steranko cover and many interior illoes by comics pro Mike Gustovich. The game does not live up to the package.

Author and publisher Kevin Siembieda has made his personal biases a main feature of this game. Kevin is a talented technical artist who likes to draw machinery. There are eight pages of writeups for firearms. In fact, a careful evaluation of the game system shows that a talented normal with proficiency with an AK-47 is the most potent character in the game. You can hit a target with several bullets while the Human Torch would be getting off one fire blast. And the damage is the same!

I have yet to find any way to create a **Heroes Unlimited** character who can lift more than a large car. Apparently Siembieda is trying to impose reality on comics hero role-playing. This is a mistake in a game which goes out of its way to tell the reader that a rule is unrealistic only because "that's how things are done in the comics".

Siembieda imposes a **Dungeons and Dragons** style character class and experience point system. A character needs a certain number of experience points to go up one "level". The higher level you are, the more proficient you are.

As a general system this is fine, but why must each of nine "Character Classes" (Bionics, Mutants, Psionics, Robotics, etc.) have a different number of points it needs for level advancement? Particularly when the differences in point values are as little as 100 points out of 2000? Again, this is a holdover from the D&D style of rules writing. The combat system is also very similar to the D&D model, where the armor worn by a character determines how easy he is to hit rather than how much protection from damage it delivers when a hit is scored.

I'm afraid that **Heroes Unlimited** is in fact limited—by **Dungeons and Dragons**.

VILLAINS & VIGILANTES

Devil's Domain is the latest V&V scenario to hit the stands. And it is intriguing. The devil himself, or a reasonable facsimile, is creating a huge set of vortexes in the world in an attempt to drag in more souls. Other heroes have already entered the vortex, never to be seen again. Can you stop the Devil's plan? The scenario takes the heroes to three locations in an attempt to stop the master plot. Finally the heroes actually wind up in some form of Hell, where they find that their world is only one of three in line for torment.

This scenario is difficult to translate into other game systems because of the multitude of demonic monsters. Still, this is a unique attempt to bring supernatural horror into superhero gaming, and it works pretty well. It should be seriously considered, even if you play one of the other superhero games.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Hero Games, 92A 21st Ave, San Mateo, CA94402

GOLDEN AGE OF CHAMPIONS
Firebird Lmtd, PO Box 4180, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

HEROES UNLIMITED
Palladium, 5669 Casper Ave, Detroit, MI 48210

SUPERGAME
DAG Prod, 1810 14th St, Santa Monica, CA 90404

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Fantasy Games, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11578

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